University of Alberta

Spirituality in the Adult Learning Quest

by

Garfield Kevin Hood ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education.

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 2001

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On Educating for Love

I recently heard a professional educator expounding on the ills of education. He was directing his remarks to young adults and their challenge to meet the demands of tomorrow. What he said made sense, but it left an incomplete picture and left me feeling frustrated and sad. He said that knowledge was doubling every three years and that educators were unable to cope with the challenge. Regretfully, he omitted saying that tomorrow's adults more than ever will need to learn how to be loving human beings. He said nothing about the need to cultivate sensitivity, responsibility, commitment to other people and to our environment.

It seemed to me that if our knowledge becomes dated so quickly, much of it must be transitory. Perhaps we should be telling our children that not all knowledge becomes obsolete overnight; that there are truths that transcend our books and changing beliefs. Surely teaching about the latest technology and how to be successful do not preclude also teaching a sense of goodness, gentleness, giving, caring, spirituality and love. These alone remain our fixed truths, essential for human survival, as well as technical success, even in today's fast-changing world.

Leo Buscaglia (Born for Love, 1992, p. 246)

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Spirituality in the Adult Learning Quest** submitted by Garfield Kevin Hood in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education.

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January 26, 2001
Date

Dedication

To my parents, Franklin and Patricia Hood,

with love.

Abstract

Although adult educators are often challenged to help students find meaning and purpose in their lives, academics often avoid the topic of spirituality as a research topic or within the classroom setting. This research utilizes a heuristic methodology to understand the experience of spirituality within the context of adult and higher education. Four adult research participants were interviewed about their experience of spirituality in order to develop a framework to understand the experience. The research participants were also asked to comment on how they felt spirituality linked to education. The author utilizes the participants experience combined with an overview of literature and research that has been done on spirituality to discuss the need for and implications of incorporating the notion of spirituality into adult and higher education.

Preface

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us.
We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?
Actually, who are we not to be?
You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world.
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.
We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.
It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone.
And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
As we are liberated from our own fears, our presence automatically liberates others.

Nelson Mandela
Inaugural Speech, 1994

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the many friends, family and colleagues who encouraged me while I worked on this project. Your love and friendship are a gift. I would especially like to thank my dear friend, Debra Lynkowski, for her love and support. I am also grateful to have met my good friend, Wendy Caplan, at the beginning of this project—our friendship made the past five years both spirited and soulful.

Without the support and assistance of many people, this thesis would not have been possible. Most notably, thank you to Dr. Sue Scott, my thesis supervisor, who somehow balanced patience with a firm hand and knew when to finally say, “We’re done.” Thank you to Dr. Tara Fenwick and Dr. Ric Laplante, my committee members—your feedback helped me bring closure to this piece of my journey. Lastly, thank you to the four research participants who shared their lives so openly and honestly with me—you allowed me to share your journeys, which was a great gift.

Finally, thank you to my partner, Raymond, who has heard about the trials and tribulations of writing a thesis over the past five years, and yet, has continued to be supportive and encouraging.

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Chapter I: Spirituality as a Research Problem

> The soul asks that we maintain a sense of wonder at the mystery that we are and that which is ever unfolding about us. For the soul gives us the sense that there is truly a purpose to our lives, indeed to life itself. This purpose has very little to do with the results that we ordinarily call our purpose in life.
>
> (Father Paul Keenan, 2000, p. 13)

Introduction

Research on topics such as spirituality or soul has at times been avoided due to the elusive nature of the phenomena. These concepts are also sometimes categorized as being beyond the scope of research as they are neither tangible nor "quantifiable". In opposition to this notion, the following research will provide an opportunity to understand the individual experience of spirituality and develop a framework for understanding how individuals might develop their spirituality within the context of adult and higher education.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The question that drives this research has grown out of my own transformative learning experience. The resulting period of personal reflection caused me to examine and try to gain a clearer understanding of spirituality and the role spirituality plays in relation to my own academic experience as a student and educator. The research question itself appears quite simple: **"What is the meaning of spirituality to adult learners and educators?"** In my struggle to answer this question, I first endeavoured to develop an understanding of the concept of spirituality itself. Through in-depth interviews and other data collection techniques, I attempted to reveal the essence and meaning of this aspect of human experience. Having created a common understanding of the experience of spirituality, I move on to develop an understanding of spirituality within the context of adult education. Some of the sub-questions that emerged from the research are:

1. What meanings do different individuals give to “spirituality”?
2. How do individuals understand "spirit" and “soul”?
3. Does a relationship exist between spirituality and a person’s search for meaning and purpose?
4. How do people "cultivate" or develop their spirituality?
5. What relationship exists between spiritual development and education?

Statement of Significance

Krishnamurti (1953) speaks to the academy’s long-standing struggle to help students find purpose and meaning within an educational context. He indicates:

> Education is not merely a matter of training the mind. Training makes for efficiency, but it does not bring about completeness. A mind that has been merely trained is the continuation of the past, and such a mind can never discover the new. That is why, to find out what is right education, we have to inquire into the whole **significance of living**. [Emphasis added] (p. 13)

This admonition to create educational experiences that involve “significance of living” has been cultivated by transformative learning theorists. Mezirow (1991), in his book Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning, indicates that learning can be understood “as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action." He goes on to indicate that "action" within the context of transformation theory is not only behaviour but also "praxis, the creative implementation of a purpose". Although this statement identifies the search for meaning that occurs within transformative education, it fails to capture the larger concept of "significance of living". As I considered my own academic experiences, recognizing these deficiencies forced me to rethink the notion of transformation as it relates to adult education. My efforts to gain a clearer understanding of the concepts of meaning formation and purpose, account not only for my research into spirituality and education, but also point to the significance of this study.

My primary reason for becoming involved with research on spirituality evolved from my teaching experiences. As an adult educator, I teach courses on interpersonal communication, human relations, and counselling techniques at the college level. Over the ten years that I have taught at Grant MacEwan College, a number of students have entered into discussions with me as to why they were continuing their post-secondary education. These discussions often related, at least in part, to the student's search for personal "meaning" or "purpose". In my discussions with students about this educational need, I sensed that many adult education students returned to school to establish meaning in their life in terms of personal goals and purpose. They also returned to school in order to re-establish or form some sense of belonging or connection with other students and instructors. As I contemplated these ideas, the concept that seemed to best capture this need was the notion of "spirituality". When I then went on to analyze my own return to adult education, I found that these same ideas permeated my return to school. Shortly after my return to university, one of my college students was killed in an automobile accident. This young man had left college and then later returned after working for a period of time. When I look at my personal journals relating to this experience, they provide insight into my own journey and decision to research spirituality and education:

> It was all a bit overwhelming and left me questioning things like why I was back in school, what this all meant, and ultimately ...our individual meaning and purpose. The questioning was part of some dialogue I had initially started with the student mentioned above. He had returned to school after being in the workforce for around six years. We talked often about how he had matured and his perspective had changed and how he now felt he was ready for school as he saw the "purpose". I truly enjoyed these discussions and so when this student was suddenly killed, I began to question some of my beliefs. I am not a religious person, but I do believe we all have a purpose and there are reasons for us being here. Suddenly this was being challenged and I was questioning some of my own suppositions. Part of that questioning revolved around me being in school and studying adult education. I recognized around me numerous people who were doing some of the same things as my student. We had returned to school to more clearly define our "purpose" and to put new "meaning" in our life, jobs, etc. For myself, I had returned to school with a purpose. I knew where I wanted to do my research, what it would look like and the end results of doing the research... a full time teaching position. Suddenly I was questioning it all...

Although there continued to be a practical need for me to upgrade my education for professional reasons, there was also an over-riding need for me to make sense out of my educational experience and professional choices—to find meaning and purpose in my life. As I started to discuss these ideas with other students and adult educators, there was acknowledgement of the supposition if not the terminology itself.

The largest stumbling block when discussing the concept of spirituality within the academy is the word "spirituality" itself. The mention of the term seems to create discomfort for some researchers and academics as they view the topic as philosophical rather than empirical in nature. Karen Harlos (2000) points out that "literature perpetuates ambiguity by accepting spirituality simply as a mystical or soulful experience" (p. 615). As a result, entering into discussions on spirituality moves education from the scholarly, scientific paradigm to the realm of personal experience. The term spirituality also has a dynamic quality that has made numerous transformations over the years based on society's religious, political or social climate. Linda Vogel (2000) recently described this dilemma, indicating:

> Defining *spirituality* is a nebulous task; there is no commonly agreed-upon definition. Some find the term to their liking, others find it too vague and without substance. Some feel that the word *spirituality* diminishes their religious faith, whatever it might be; for others, it is a preferred term precisely because it does not contain particular doctrinal, historical, or theological content. (p. 17)

Part of our discomfort in discussing spirituality also relates to its numinous character that forces us into a personal confrontation with the unknown and mysterious. Whether we view the term from a religious or scientific vantage-point, Gerald Porter (1995) warns us that a "preoccupation with the unknown and mysterious by some people can be quite threatening to others seeking or needing the assurance of an orderly universe in which everything worthwhile is already known or is knowable by ordinary means..." (p. 71).

Rachel Naomi Remen (1999) describes this need for order within our current education system, indicating that rather than cultivating a sense of openness and engagement, educational institutions instead heighten our feelings of isolation and insulation. Remen argues that schooling builds up preconceptions, expectations, and rigid notions of order. It breaks down our experience of an alive whole into an endless array of categories, taxonomies, concepts, criteria, and evaluative judgements. These categories are then studied, almost exclusively, using conceptual and material approaches. Remen (1999) concludes that as a society we are often faced with an identity crisis. "We are not quite sure of who or what we are, or where we fit in a bigger picture. Many of us have no big picture at all. We have lost touch with the sustaining qualities of spirit, community, and the earth. We have no notion of inner landscape, or inner lives. We don't see or understand the impact of our actions on others, and on the planet" (p. 80).

The clearest definition that I have found for the concept of spirituality from a research framework, is from a phenomenological study done by David Elkins, James Hedstrom, Lori Hughes, Andrew Leaf and Cheryl Saunders (1988) out of Pepperdine University. They define spirituality as "a way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life, and whatever one considers the Ultimate" (p. 10).

Virginia Griffin (1993) develops the concept of spirituality from an educational framework in her article "Holistic Learning, Teaching in Adult Education." She indicates that:

> Spirituality is an awareness, wonder, and deep sense of awe of the present, the potential, of persons or nature. It is an awareness and awe of connectedness of what is and what could be. It includes your vision of what could be for yourself--your purpose in life--for others, for nature. (p. 121)

She goes on to discuss the spiritual experience as it relates to education and teaching. She indicates that teachers and learners who allow their spiritual capacities to develop often communicate the awe they feel about life, learning, and the deep (or higher) sources of meaning. She quotes Molly Brown, indicating that:

> Spiritual awakening takes many forms, compatible with the qualities and characteristics of the individual. It may be an artistic urge, a strong impulse to express one's self in colour, shapes, textures or music. It may come as a vision to create something of service to the world...Many people speak of 'being guided' in their lives by wisdom beyond their consciousness. (Griffin, 1993, p. 122.)

Within the literature review presented in this document I will continue to explore in more detail, some of the different understandings of spirituality as they relate to human development.

In their book Conscious Education: The Bridge to Freedom, Philip Gang, Nina Meyerhof and Dorothy Maver (1992) refer to the concept of "transpersonal learning" which they define as nurturing the intuitive, imaginative and creative capacity of each individual, to help in the unfoldment of self-understanding and life purpose. When discussing the concept of spirituality within an educational framework they draw on the work of Alice Bailey and her "spiritual taxonomy". They indicate that as educators, we need to be aware that adults over the age of 28 are entering the stage of soul-infused personality. This is referred to as "…a time of getting in touch with your life purpose. During this period, individuals often decide to change careers, or make moves that will more fully satisfy the desire to serve and be a conscious contributor to the well-being of the human family and this planet. The realization of interconnectedness, interdependence and universal responsibility is paramount, and the person chooses to live a more selflessly responsible life" (p. 33). When developing the concept of spirituality within education, Gang, Meyerhof and Mayer (1992) suggest that the intention of building educational programs with spirituality as a foundation is to promote individual creative expression and social responsibility: "Spirituality does not become a subject matter, but is rather the thread that runs through and permeates all activity" (p. 57).

Dorothy MacKeracher (1996), in her text on adult learning, indicates that the literature up to this point has focused on spirituality within three contexts. These three contexts are:

1. spiritual learning that helps us to connect with a higher consciousness or cosmic being, which is often referred to as "transcendent" learning (i.e. Wilber);
2. spiritual learning that helps us to move beyond the limits of our model of reality, which is often referred to as "transformative" learning (i.e.

Mezirow); and,

3. Spiritual learning that helps us move beyond the limits of our self-system to touch others in meaningful ways, which is referred to as "transpersonal" learning.

Within these three contexts, the learner gains some insight into their own meaning or purpose. "An insight may help the individual transcend previously existing boundaries of self thereby permitting feelings of being in touch with a higher consciousness or cosmic being...or, an insight might allow the individual to feel able to reach out to others in new and expanded ways...or, an insight might provide the transformative knowledge necessary to induce an extensive reorganization of the individual's personal model of reality" (MacKeracher, p. 172).

My research examines the individual experience of spirituality and places this experience within the adult education environment. This provides a clearer understanding of spiritual learning within these three contexts, allowing me to develop a framework for understanding the relationship between a student's need to find meaning and purpose, the concept of spirituality, and how these concepts relate to adult education. As adult educators, it is imperative that we recognize the role that transformative learning plays in education and that we encourage students to engage in activities that bring meaning and purpose to their lives. Understanding the spiritual dimensions of adult learning provides us with a foundation for this endeavour.

Delimitations

My strongest presupposition at the outset of this research was that I felt that many adults returned to school, at least in part, to find meaning or purpose in their life. I also recognized that as a society, many individuals feel detached from each other as a result of social changes such as the predominance of the nuclear family and the collapse of organized religion. Connected with these hypotheses, I suspected that part of our “search” relates to a need to develop connectedness and meaning in our lives. This search to find meaning and purpose, and our desire to form connections with people and establish a sense of "community", are concepts I related to spirituality. My own experience of returning to school seemed akin to what Mezirow might term a transformative learning experience. Mezirow (1991) indicates that transformative learning results in new or transformed meaning schemes that result in new ways of interpreting experience. In my case, this represented a movement from viewing education as something quite functional (relating to a better job) to education taking on a more “spiritual” focus related to the meanings I create in my life. This process caused me to question my own reasons for returning to school and the meanings I take from the educational process. I associated these questions with my own spiritual journey, which became the impetus for my research. Through the research process, I expected to accomplish two things. Foremost, through interviewing research participants and continuing with my own self-reflection I expected to develop a better understanding of the experience of spirituality. Subsequently, I wanted to determine whether there was any apparent relationship between spirituality and learning. This thesis will speak to both of these areas and in the end will unfold a deeper understanding of spirituality from a personal perspective and develop a framework that connects spirituality to adult learning.

Limitations

As has been previously discussed, researching a topic such as spirituality can be fraught with problems. Often the term is most clearly associated with theology and moral education. This research project did not enter into a discussion of spirituality as a religious concept and in no way suggested a belief in, or preponderance for, any particular religious denomination. The purpose of the research was to gain an understanding of adult learners' experiences of spirituality from an experiential, heuristic perspective.

One weakness of this study is that the validity of the data might be viewed as limited. In order to understand the experience of spirituality, four adult learners were asked to journal about their experience of spirituality and then were interviewed and asked to describe their understanding of spirituality, how it related to their desire to find meaning and purpose in their lives, and then consider these concepts in relation to their educational goals and expectations. The research methodology provided an opportunity to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experience, but was limited by the participants' ability to recall, interpret, and describe the experiences accurately and effectively. The descriptions may also have been subject to some distortions as the participant were describing their experience based on their present knowledge and recollection as opposed to describing events at the actual time they were occurring.

Another concern regarding the validity of the descriptions that was considered was that although every effort was made to keep interviews open-ended, and allow participants to freely describe their experiences, participants may have been influenced by questions or comments made by me, the interviewer. The opportunity to journal before being interviewed was one attempt to reconcile this limitation, as participants were able to freely journal their experiences and thoughts on spirituality without my interference. No limitations were set on how often they should journal or what the format should be.

Another limiting factor in the research design was the method of participant selection. Participants were selected based on two criteria: they identified themselves as having returned to adult education to find meaning and purpose in their lives, and they indicated an interest in the research and a willingness to participate in the full research process. This method of choosing participants was inherently biased as it involved participants who were interested in the topic.

Finally, the fact that only four participants were interviewed for the research was a limitation in that it was a small sample size. Recognizing this, consideration was given to still providing balance within this small group. The participants included three females and one male. Two of the participants were raised in Canada, one was raised in the United States, and one was from South Africa; three participants had recently been involved in educational pursuits at higher education institutions, and one had pursued learning through self-directed workshops and readings.

Implications of the Research

As an adult educator, my ultimate goal within this research was to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between spirituality, education and learning. My hope was, that having gained a clearer understanding of spirituality and its connection to learning, that I would eventually be able to move the research forward. With continued research, I would like to be able to consider how we might start to incorporate some of the concepts of spirituality and learning into adult education in a more intentional way. If my presuppositions are correct, adult learners expect the educational process to be more "transformational". My hope is that the research that follows will begin this process.

Having explained some of the reasons for and implications of the research, chapter two now goes on to explain the research methodology and why I utilized this approach. Chapters three and four present the data from the research participants. These chapters are filled with stories and quotes that help the reader understand each participant's view of spirituality and how they link spirituality to education. Chapter five presents an overview of the research and literature that has been completed in the area of spirituality and education. Finally, in chapter six, I synthesize the insights provided by the research participants and the literature to develop a clearer understanding of spirituality within the adult learner context, and how educators might incorporate spirituality into adult education. The final chapter ends with recommendations for practice that support transformative learning.

Chapter II: Heuristic Methodology

> Heuristics is concerned with meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behavior.
>
> (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985, p. 42)

Introduction

Because of the subjective nature of the research topic and the intense discussions that emerged, I chose the heuristic research methodology to analyse my data. Moustakas (1990), in his book Heuristic Research, indicates that within the heuristic approach the researcher creates a "story" that portrays the qualities, meanings, and essences of universally unique experiences.

> Through an unwavering and steady inward gaze and inner freedom to explore and accept what is, [the researcher reaches] into deeper and deeper regions of a human problem or experience and [comes] to know and understand its underlying dynamics and constituents more and more fully. The initial "data" are within ... the challenge is to discover and explicate its nature. In the process, [the researcher is] not only lifting out the essential meanings of an experience, but... actively awakening and transforming... self. (p. 13)

The usefulness of the heuristic process is the acceptance of the researcher's experience as being valid and useful to the inquiry; the researcher is able to engage in scientific discovery through self-inquiry and dialogue with others. Douglas and Moustakas (1985) go on to explain that:

> …heuristics is concerned with meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality not quantity; with experience not behavior. Formal hypotheses play no part, though the researcher may have initial

> beliefs or convictions regarding the theme or question, based on intuition and on prior knowledge and experience. (p. 42)

As is the case with other qualitative research methodologies, heuristic research requires a subjective process of reflection on, and exploration, examination and description of the phenomenon under investigation. Douglas and Moustakas (1985) explain that:

> The power of heuristic inquiry lies in its potential for disclosing truth. Through exhaustive self-search, dialogues with others, and creative depictions of the experience, a comprehensive knowledge is generated, beginning as a series of subjective musings and developing into a systematic and definitive exposition. (p. 40)

Moustakas and Douglas (1985) speak of the passionate, yet disciplined commitment that is required to illuminate the research question. Heuristic methodology is a subjective process of living the question internally, recording hunches, ideas and essences as they emerge, and finally consulting with others regarding the phenomenon or experience. They describe the process as a "dedicated pursuit, inspired by a hunger for new insight and revelation" (p. 43).

Heuristic Methodology

Moustakas and Douglas (1985) describe a process of heuristic inquiry that begins with immersion, self-dialogue, and self-exploration and develops into an exploration of the nature of the experience in others. The path of heuristic methodology is self-directed, self-motivated, and open to change. In the Handbook of Qualitative Research, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) provide detail to the heuristic process, describing it within a five-phase model:

> First, immersion in the setting starts the inductive process. Second, the incubation process allows for thinking, becoming aware of nuance and meaning in the setting, and capturing intuitive insights, to achieve understanding. Third, there is a phase of illumination that allows for expanding awareness. Fourth, and most understandably, is a phase of explication that includes description and explanation to capture the experience of individuals in the study. Finally, creative synthesis enables the researcher to synthesize and bring together as a whole the individual's story, including the meaning of the lived experience. (p. 391)

Moustakas and Douglas (1985) on the other hand, focus on a three-phase model to illustrate the heuristic process. The three phases include immersion, acquisition, and realization. Moustakas and Douglas attach the following qualities to the three phases:

Immersion: (exploration of the question, problem, or theme)
- Indwelling
- Internal frame of reference
- Self-search

Acquisition (collection of data)
- Tacit knowing
- Intuition
- Inference
- Self-dialogue
- Self-disclosure

Realization (synthesis)
- Intentionality
- Verification
- Dissemination (pp. 46-47)

The first phase of the heuristic model, immersion, focuses on the researcher's sense of total involvement in the research question. This initial stage reflects a process of continued self-search and reflection. The researcher typically progresses from a feeling of vague uncertainty to a growing sense of meaning and purpose as the parameters of the question become clearer. Within the heuristic perspective, reference is made to the concept of "in-dwelling" which describes an internal frame of reference that allows the researcher to be captivated by a particular image, sensation or realization and pause to explore its meaning or significance more fully. Moustakas and Douglas acknowledge that the process of in-dwelling may be more commonly recognized as "tacit knowing" among researchers.

The process of immersion begins from an internal frame of reference and moves outwards as the researcher gains a clearer understanding of the themes and questions encompassing the experience. At this point, the researcher has a clearer sense of the direction that the research questions are taking and will begin the data collection process. Data, within the heuristic framework, can be broadly viewed as any material that adds richness or understanding to the phenomenon in question. The heuristics method does not allow the researcher to ignore disciplined and systematic methodology, but encourages the spontaneous creation of methods that evoke new insights. Moustakas and Douglas (1985) explain:

> Without the formal hypotheses to predispose the search, one is not only free but obliged to follow the path that holds most promise for disclosing the truth; it is the focused attentiveness and internal alertness, rather than predetermined methods and procedures, that guides the researcher into revelations of meaning. (p. 49)

Moving from a place of tacit knowing, the researcher uses inference and intuition to enhance and refine an awareness of the experience, creating a more and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Given the intensity of the research process, the researcher may feel compelled to utilize self-disclosure as a way of facilitating disclosure from research participants. This process of self-dialogue, and self-disclosure and focused dialogue with research participants, allows the researcher to continue to refine their understanding of the emerging themes. Focusing and differentiating become important aspects of the acquisition process. Moustakas and Douglas (1985) indicate that:

> These processes are important tools for guiding the researcher toward that which is most significant, that which most fully represents the experiential essence of the heuristic theme or question. Focusing and differentiating are not used to judge, to categorize, or to exclude; rather, they supplement the powers of perception, permitting the person to move with the flow of experience more freely toward inclusion of all that will reveal the phenomenon more effectively. (p. 51)

The final phase of the heuristic process is called realization. This phase synthesizes the various components of the research. The heuristic approach outlines a data analysis process that follows a repetitive cycle of immersion, illumination and explication of the phenomenon being investigated. As Moustakas and Douglas describe this process, they indicate that:

> The challenge is to examine all the collected data in creative combinations and recombinations, sifting and sorting, moving rhythmically in and out of appearance, looking, listening carefully for the meanings within meanings, attempting to identify the overarching qualities that inhere the data. This is a quest for synthesis through realization of what lies most undeniably at the heart of all that has been discovered. Synthesis goes beyond distillation of themes and patterns. It is not a summary or recapitulation. In synthesis, the searcher is challenged to generate a new reality, a new monolithic significance that embodies the essence of the heuristic truth. (p. 52)

Before explaining my own research process, I leave these parting words from Moustakas and Douglas (1985):

> Heuristics encourages the researcher to go wide open and to pursue an original path that has its origins within the self, and that discovers its direction and meaning within the self. It does not aim to produce experts who learn the rules and mechanics of science; rather, it guides human beings in the process of asking questions about phenomena that disturb and challenge their own existence. (p. 53)

Field Entry Issues

In order to attract a broad range of possible research participants, I chose a number of different methods of contact. I met with professors at St. Stephens College (a theological college at the University of Alberta) to discuss my research and request that if they had students, colleagues or were themselves interested in my research to contact me. I also sent out a request for participants through the University of Alberta's graduate studies computer "listserv" explaining the nature of my research and requesting that if there were students interested in my research, to contact me. Finally, I spoke about my research often within the context of classroom discussions during my Master's program and indicated that if any of my colleagues were interested in participating in my research, or could recommend someone who might be interested, to let me know.

Although the process of selecting participants for the research was not strictly delineated, I tried to choose people who were involved in adult education either as educators or learners and identified themselves as having an interest in the concept of spirituality. I did not define spirituality for the participant, as I did not want to include or exclude a particular individual just by the nature of my definition. Otherwise, the only other criteria by which participants were selected were their willingness and ability to articulate their experience and understanding of spirituality, and their willingness to make a commitment to the process and timeframe of the research. Of the final group of four participants, two students identified themselves through the computer listserv, one participant was recommended by a colleague within my Master's program, and one participant was a work colleague who had been involved in a process of self-directed learning in the area of spirituality. All of the participants indicated they had been engaging in their own learning about spirituality and had been involved in pursuits related to finding meaning and purpose in their lives.

At the beginning of the research, given the intense nature of the topic, I knew I would need to establish trust and rapport with the research participants. I spent time during each introductory meeting establishing rapport with participants by ensuring that they understood the nature of the research and their role within the process. Participants were informed that they would receive pseudonyms for identification within my thesis, would remain anonymous, and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Participants were asked not to make an immediate commitment to the research at the first meeting to allow them time to think about their involvement and not cause them to feel pressured into participating. I allowed participants to choose the location of their interviews while still ensuring that acoustics and interruptions were kept to a minimum. Each of the participants was interviewed three times. Two of the participants chose to be interviewed at my home, one participant was interviewed in her own home, and one participant was interviewed over the telephone, as this participant did not live in Edmonton. My hope was that this would allow each participant to feel comfortable and relaxed enough to engage in open and candid discussions about their experience of spirituality.

Data Collection Methods

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the concept of spirituality from a broad perspective, I interviewed four research participants. In line with the heuristic approach, I utilized a variety of data collection methods for this project. Having agreed to be a part of the research, each participant was expected to commit to approximately a one-month time frame. During this time, they were asked to participate in a series of interviews as well as keep a journal detailing their ideas and insights on the research topic. The participants each provided me with a journal of their thoughts on spirituality prior to their second interview. I did not provide guidelines as to how the journals should be written, other than indicating that the participant should write about their experience of spirituality. Participants were encouraged to share books or other material within the research interviews or within their personal journals that might help clarify their understanding of spirituality. I interviewed each of the participants on two separate occasions. Within the interviews, participants were asked to define spirituality as they understood the concept and then to describe how they believed the concept of spirituality related to education. Participants were encouraged to illuminate their definitions and descriptions with stories, anecdotes or quotes. At the end of the interviews, participants were asked to complete a piece of work that summarized their experience of spirituality. This work might include further journal submissions or written material, but might also include a poem, piece of art, or piece of music that helped exemplify their experience.

The Interview Process

I conducted three interviews with each participant. The first interview was in fact just a meeting to introduce the research agenda, get acquainted with the participant and provide them with the documentation (see Appendix A and B) explaining the research. The first meeting allowed each of us to introduce ourselves and begin the process of establishing rapport and trust. During this interview I provided the participant with information about my research topic, the expected process and time commitment, and then asked them to take some time to think about whether they were able to commit to the research process. The participants were asked to take the Participant Release Agreement (See Appendix) with them to consider, rather than feeling pressured to consent to participate in the research at this first meeting. After having had an opportunity to think over their involvement, if they were still interested in participating in the research, they could contact me and we would set a time for a second meeting.

Having committed to their involvement in the research, before their second interview, each participant was invited to write a narrative or keep a journal that detailed their understanding of spirituality. This provided an opportunity for the participant to begin thinking about spirituality without the bias of my questions influencing them. I requested each participant to share his or her journal with me or give me a copy at the second interview.

The subsequent research interviews were not rigorously structured, allowing discussions to progress from an introductory perspective to a more reflective process. The second interview focused on beginning insights and involved research conversation on the broad subject of spirituality. The participant was allowed to "tell their story" to a point of natural closure. Throughout the process, I encouraged participants to clarify concepts such as spirit or soul as the concept arose. If the participant was not able to formulate ideas or continue in an area, I had developed a set of questions that we could revert to. The list of questions included the following:

1. How would you define or explain the concept of spirituality?
2. How would you define or explain the concept of spirit or soul?
3. What do you see as the differentiating principles?
4. Does a relationship exist between spirituality and a person's search for meaning and purpose?
5. Have you chosen any educational or learning activity to further your

search for meaning? Can you talk about that experience?

6. What relationship do you see between spirituality and education?
7. Many adult educators talk about the concept of transformative learning. Do you have any understanding what this concept might entail given your own experiences with spirituality and education?

None of the participants required prompting with the questions within their interview. Each spoke about their spirituality freely and in the process, attended to most of the above questions.

The third interview allowed each participant to reflect on their second interview, offer new insights, discuss their journal/narrative, reflect on the process, and offer closing insights. This third interview was particularly important to the overall process, as often participants were able to reflect on our discussions between interviews and in this last interview were able to clarify concepts they may have initially struggled to explain.

In each case, the participants were interested in learning more about what insights I had gained from my own research and the interviews I had already conducted. Prior to the third interview, I had been cognisant of not influencing the data and so had been unwilling to provide comments related to my own experience of spirituality or what insights I had gained through the research process. Having completed the interview process, I was open to offering the participant some of this information for his or her consideration.

At the conclusion of their third interview, each participant was asked to submit a piece of writing (story, narrative or poem) or some other creative work that in some way exemplified or summarized their experience of spirituality. The purpose of this exercise was to increase clarity through the continued use of metaphor and strengthen one's understanding of his or her spirituality. This exercise would also provide additional insights into the participant's thinking for research purposes.

Ethical Concerns and Considerations

Ethically, I feel my greatest responsibility within the research was to remain true to the essence of each participant's experience. Given that the final composite analysis might not represent any one participant exactly, checking back with the participants (validation) was an important component to establishing validity within the research. As well, I kept a journal detailing an audit trail of all of the interviews (data collection) and the process of data analysis.

To reassure the participants of the ethics and confidentiality of the research process, I clarified why the research was being conducted and how the data would be collected, transcribed and stored. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the research study at any time. Pseudonyms were given to each participant to protect their identity. The Participant Release Agreement (See Appendix) details the agreement that each participant consented to in the second interview.

Data Analysis and Theme Development

Although I did not want to impose extreme conformity in the data analysis process, the following methods as outlined by Moustakas (1990) were utilized as a framework for the process:

1. The researcher gathers all of the data collected from one participant (i.e. recordings, transcripts, notes, journals, poems, etc.)
2. The researcher "immerses" themselves into the data until the participant's experience as a whole and in its detail is comprehensively understood.
3. The data is set aside, encouraging a period of rest and then return to the data. After reviewing all of the material again, the researcher identifies qualities and themes manifested in the data and creates an individual depiction that encompasses the participant's experience.
4. The researcher then returns to the original data and confirms that the depiction accurately represents the experience of the participant. Validation with the actual participant is recommended at this stage. Any discrepancies should be corrected.
5. When the above steps have been completed with one participant, the researcher may move on to complete the same steps with each of the other research participants.
6. The researcher would then gather all of the individual depictions together and

enter into an "immersion process" with intervals of rest until the universal qualities and themes of the experience are thoroughly internalized and understood. A composite depiction is developed that provides a vivid, accurate and clear depiction of all of the core meanings of the phenomenon as experienced by the individual participants and by the group as a whole.

7. The final step in the data analysis involves the researcher developing a creative synthesis of the experience. This creative synthesis encourages the researcher to tap into imaginative and contemplative sources of knowledge and insight and infuses the work with personal and professional insights that may be expressed through narrative, story, poem, work of art, etc.

In order to gain a clear understanding of each participant's perspective, the data from each participant was analyzed and a comparison done between sources (i.e. interview transcripts and journals). Through the data analysis, it became apparent that for each participant there were three over-riding qualities or themes that were paramount to understanding spirituality. The three themes were the concept of spirit, the concept of soul, and the notion of spiritual journey. Within each of these "higher order themes", subthemes developed. The themes and respective subthemes were compiled in table format as a preliminary depiction of each participant's information (See Appendix C: An Early Personal Formulation of Participant Themes). The table also includes a theme related to participants' views on the interface between religion and spirituality. Although not explicitly related to a participant's understanding of spirituality, this issue is one that permeated the participants' comments. The link between spirituality and education is another theme portrayed in the chart. This table served as a reference point for ensuring that each participant's view was captured in the data. Each concept develops as the participants tell their stories in chapters four and five.

Presentation of Findings

As I contemplated how I might format or present the data, it initially seemed expedient to devote a section of a chapter to each of the themes and then provide comments on each theme from each participant's perspective. This approach would be faithful to the themes, but not the participants. It became clear that in order to truly understand each participant's view of spirituality, the reader would need to understand the background and perspective of the participant. To that end, I have designed chapters III and IV to give voice to each of the participants. In chapter III, I introduce each participant and provide a brief description of their background. Each participant's understanding of a particular theme is presented in summary form or through the use of illustrative quotations from their interviews or journals. As you will see, most of the information that is provided is in quotation form in order to allow the participant's own perspective to be communicated. After all of the participant's ideas have been presented, a brief summary of each theme is offered. Similarities and differences in the participants' perceptions are also highlighted. Although not a theme directly related to spirituality, each participant was asked to comment on how they felt the concept of spirituality related to education; this information is outlined for the reader's consideration in chapter IV. I revisit all of the themes in the final chapter.

Reflections on Heuristic Methodology

As a final note, I would like to comment on my experience using heuristics as a research methodology. Heuristics has strengths and weaknesses when utilized by a novice researcher. The greatest strength of the model is the flexibility it provides the researcher in tailoring their exploration to the needs of the participants. Heuristics enabled me to be true to the participants' experience and capture their understanding of spirituality. Unfortunately, this same flexibility can also be a weakness. Because of the openness of the model, I often found myself without boundaries and structure, which may have influenced the amount of time it took me to conduct my research. New researchers may find it helpful to use a more structured methodology. In the end, the methodology did allow me to capture the experience of each of the participants; hopefully it provides an opportunity for you, the reader, to understand the meanings and insights the participants tried to convey.

Chapter III: Spirited, Soulful Voices

> The soul is the principle by which we look deeply into things and discover that things have a value only insofar as they fulfill a deep underlying purpose. That purpose has something to do with lifting up others and ourselves. The soul is the force that tells us that to touch hearts and make the world a better place is the only price that is worth paying for the things we put into our lives.
>
> (Father Paul Keenan, 2000, p. 10)

Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, through the data analysis, it became apparent that for each participant there were three over-riding themes that were paramount to understanding spirituality. In this chapter, I seek to describe the major themes from the perspective of the four participants. These themes involve the concept of spirit, the concept of soul, and the notion of spiritual journey.

Within the chapter, each participant is introduced and a brief description of their background is provided. Each participant's understanding of a particular theme is presented, a substantial part of the information that is provided is in quotation form in order to allow the participant's own perspective to be communicated. At the conclusion of the chapter, a brief summary of the similarities and differences between the participants' perceptions is presented.

Kate

Kate is a woman in her late 30's employed as a manager in the non-profit sector;

she has lived all of her life in Alberta. Kate had been a professional colleague of mine and learned about my research in spirituality. She volunteered as a participant and fit the research critieria. Kate has two post-secondary degrees. She described her first degree as being from the liberal arts and remembered it somewhat fondly. Kate's last academic experience was not as positive (she described it as having been bereft of any spirituality) and she has had no desire to pursue any further graduate work. Throughout her life, Kate has continued to engage in activities related to her spiritual development. Kate indicated that her family was very involved in church activities throughout her childhood; as an adult, Kate no longer participates in organized religious activities. As Kate described her spiritual development, she focused on activities including self-development workshops, counselling and therapy, and extensive reading on spirituality, new age religions, native spirituality, and Eastern philosophies. She comments on the reasoning for her self-directed learning:

> I was too scared about people knowing how much I didn't know. I would never want to be exposed that way. So therefore, for me to be humble enough to be in a group setting or go to a Zen teacher or something like that would have been really hard for me to admit how little I did know. So I found that self-learning was what I did.

At the time she was interviewed, Kate had recently been involved in a relationship where her partner died of cancer. Kate identified this life event as having had a significant impact on her sense of spirituality. She described this experience in her journal writing:

> It was as though the divine was revealed to me daily, through the acts and expressions of our love and, at times, our sorrow.

I always marveled at these daily glimpses of the divine. It wasn't as though I had never experienced such things before—but to have it there daily, consistently over time, and to have it become richer with every month—this was a rare gift. These experiences were never earth shattering. Mostly, God was revealed in the smallest moments of connection with people—friends, family, colleagues, complete strangers. In fact, I had never had such connection with strangers before. I simply found it easier to lift my head, look into the eyes of someone else, and deliberately connect with this other human being—even if it was only a smile….

After he died, I went through the normal stages of grieving. In the initial stages, I had nothing but numbness and a general disinterest in this world. As is, I'm sure, quite common, nothing in this world seemed to hold much meaning anymore. This grieving period also became an intensely spiritual experience for me but in a very different way than the previous four years. In fact, connection on this world was the least thing I wanted. Instead, to stay close to him, I quite literally opened myself up to the "other side". I spent at least six months more tangibly connected to the spirit world than this one….Everything that happened seemed rich with meaning and significance. Only now, there was a deep sadness and a knowledge that to know love, you must also know loss. God seemed almost palpable during those times….This experience was also a glimpse of heaven…but in a very different way. I was literally trying to understand how and where we transcend when we die. Suddenly, talking about one's belief in an afterlife wasn't enough.

The most intriguing part of this particular spiritual journey was that it was so lacking in any connection to this world, or my daily activities…I repudiated everything I had learned before about the spirituality of connecting.

During this grieving period, I came to reaffirm my previous beliefs with a new self-possession. I believe this world is only one of many; I believe our spirits endure over ages; I believe we are here to acquire knowledge, to love, and to give our best to this world. And ultimately, I believe that all that will really matter in the end of this journey is how you have loved others. I also know that God is loving and forgiving and has a devilish sense of humour.

As Kate tried to pull apart the concept of spirituality, she described the concept of spirit. The four themes that emerged from Kate's understanding of spirit were: spirit as transcendence, peak experiences as a path to spirit, a search for spirit that is not self-serving, and the concept of self-work and spiritual practice.

Kate's description of spirit linked to her understanding of transcendence. She indicated that:

> Transcendence is where the spirit is completely free of encumbrances, and not that this life is an encumbrance, but to a certain degree it is. Where the spirit is completely pure, completely free and detached in some ways from all of the emotional vicissitudes that we go through here in order to transcend into our purest form. Does that mean we go to heaven? No, but I do believe our spirits transcend and we interact with one another or our spirits interact with one another in that universal consciousness and within that, are embraced by the divine.

Tied into the concept of transcendence, Kate also spoke about peak experiences in connection with her explanation of spirit. She relayed a story of being at a piano recital where she was listening to Schubert and Chopin. She recalls this peak experience in her journal:

> Music has always had the power to open my spirit, perhaps more than any other medium. And, as I sat there, with my eyes closed, listening to this sublime music, there was this moment of clarity. It's a moment that I call the "stillpoint" (T.S.Eliot called it that first.) The stillpoint—when you almost catch your breath in the wonder of really knowing what it is all about… I know I glanced around at the other people in the audience and thought—oh yes, of course, I am inextricably connected to each and every one of you. We have always been so and we will always be so. With that, I felt this deep feeling of goodwill and love for every stranger in that room—because for that moment at least, they had ceased to be strangers and they were simply souls I had already known or would know at some time. I left that recital feeling refreshed, lighter and calmer.

Kate could differentiate the concept of spirit from the concept of soul, but for her the two were inseparable. When she talked about her spiritual development, it was always in the context of how this development related to an element of "service to humanity". She recognized the need for "self work" wherein one might spend time developing a spiritual side, but she indicated that

> If your search is only individual, then that's almost self-absorption and to me that isn't being spiritual. The moment that I become so involved in my own spiritual search that I can't see other people suffering about me…then I think I'm not being spiritual.

In her journal, Kate describes her own spiritual practice:

> Am I spiritual? I have been told frequently that I am a very spiritual person. Usually, I'm not even that sure what that means but I feel very humble and grateful for the words. All I try to do in my life is to live it with compassion, love, justice and humility. I do none of these well all of the time; but I do my best to do some of it well some of the time. I have sometimes felt that my experience of spirituality is sporadic at best. I do know that for me, spiritual growth demands "exercise." And, I also find that it is ritual or practice which helps give ones spiritual experience rigor and life.

In her attempt to make a distinction between spirit and soul, Kate spoke of two important concepts related to soul: a sense of universal connectedness and the concept of "service to humanity".

Initially Kate struggled to define soul, indicating that this in some ways related to her experiences with "religion". She indicated:

> I think because of previous experience with religion I see soul in a moralistic framework and again, I see saving one's soul and it all comes back to that punitive aspect I find in religion. So, I rarely use that word to be honest, I always use spirit and I guess in some ways I must be just

> thinking of them in the same way. It's that essence of us that makes us unique and it is the one thing in us that should be, or can be the purest and is that which lives on.

As she developed the concept, Kate described soul in terms of the interconnectedness of all humanity: not just man and woman, but all creatures. For her, spiritual practice may allow us to find meaning and purpose in our lives but she indicates "if I don't use that search and the meaning and the answers we find to benefit others with love and compassion, then I don't consider that to be the essence of what spirituality is." In her journal Kate indicates:

> When I am feeling most centred and at peace, it is because I have a clear sense of where I fit in this universe. In those moments, I know my life has meaning and purpose—even if it feels ill-defined at that time. I go on faith.
>
> More often than not, that purpose is evident in the seemingly small—certainly not the grand. I know that dramatic selflessness is not my journey. I am not meant to be Mother Theresa.
>
> Yet I know that I have the ability to change other people's lives for the better when I can give of myself freely and purely. When I have gone beyond my fears, my limitations, my insecurities to offer love, encouragement, or compassion, I feel closer to God. When my thoughts are dominated by "me" or "self", I know I am distant or disconnected.

Within her interviews, Kate described her sense of connection to a global spiritual context. She recognized a "gnawing emptiness" in the world and spoke about global spiritual events that help people fill a spiritual void. One of her final comments in her journal spoke to her feelings of connection:

> Someone recently asked me if I had ever seen God. Without really thinking I said: "Yes, I see him every day when I walk through the walkways. There's a guy there selling the local street paper, *Spare*

> *Change*, so that maybe he can eat that day or get a room for the night. And, as we walk by in our suits and heels, he's the one who smiles. Now I know that's God.

As Kate spoke of her spiritual journey, she identified four important aspects: the "wake up call" that helped her find focus, an openness to spirituality and a readiness to listen, the search for meaning and purpose, and how the journey connects the lessons. As mentioned earlier, one of the most significant events that Kate identified for herself was the recent death of her partner. Kate identified these types of events as "a wake up call" to a new spiritual phase. For Kate, this "spiritual awakening" came at a time when she felt open to, and ready to engage in, a more meaningful spiritual journey. Kate recognized that there were other times in her life when she had not been open to these spiritual lessons that were being presented to her. For Kate, the journey is one where "we have to interconnect, we have to know suffering, we have to know joy, we have all kinds of lessons that we are to learn here, but…the spirit transcends this reality" and the journey connects the lessons.

In her journal, Kate writes:

> Nothing is accidental…That is not to say that everything is predestined; I do believe in free will and choice. I believe there are several paths available to us and we ultimately decide upon our own journeys. And, I believe the journey is actually the destination.
>
> T.S. Eliot makes everything so clear for me:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

(from The Four Quartets: Little Gidding)

In a final attempt to define spirituality, Kate compiled this list of descriptors in her journal that illustrate her personal journey:

Connection
Purpose/Meaningful Life
Gratitude
Love/Compassion
Serendipity
The Sacred
There is a gift in everything…look.
Everything I do has reverberations…choose wisely.
Passion for life
Passion for the people in my life
The stillpoint
The Divine/God
What difference does my presence on this earth make for others?

Although Kate did not expand on these ideas, my hope is that the reader recognizes the themes in her story.

Michelle

Michelle is a woman in her mid fifties. She is a mother and grandmother. Michelle grew up in the United States and completed her undergraduate education there. She completed her Master's degree in Canada and then spent time working as an educator in rural communities in western Canada. Michelle is presently working on her Doctoral dissertation. Michelle saw my request for research participants on the graduate studies listserv at the University of Alberta. Michelle felt she met the research criteria and could commit to the research timeframes and so, volunteered as a participant.

Michelle fell seriously ill when she was in her early forties and was in a coma for a number of months. She described this traumatic event as a "near death experience". Michelle explained that her need to understand her illness was the beginning of her search for meaning. Michelle indicated that she had spent most of her life in educational institutions either as a student or as an educator. Michelle returned to academia to "find answers to some of the big human questions". She indicated that it was natural for her to return to school to find some rational explanation for the experience. Within the academy, she was encouraged to explore her experience and find her own way. She also experienced a sense of support and community from her academic peers. Michelle identified her educational experience in graduate school as being a part of her spiritual journey.

Because of her own research in the area, Michelle initially wanted me to understand her thoughts on soul. The themes she highlighted were: soul as a sense of direction, soul as a connecting function conveying meaning, and soul as the umbilical cord with the collective unconscious. A true academic, Michelle immediately turned to the literature to explain herself. She read me a definition from James Hall (1986) that helped her define the concept of soul from a rational perspective:

> Jung called the anima and animus soul images because when the ego is out of touch with both of them, it can feel like the state that in some primitive religious systems is called loss of soul. The soul is a connecting function

> conveying a meaning that is deeper and more comprehensive than the ego ordinarily experiences. If the anima or animus is projected onto a person with whom one falls in love, then the absence of that person may feel like one has lost one's soul. But, the soul image can also be attached to things other than persons: to a cause, a purpose, to one's country, etc., even to objects--as in fetishes. The soul image gives a sense of meaningful connection beyond oneself, or at least the possibility of such a connection. It is a sense of direction. (p. 43)

Out of this quote, Michelle felt it important to reiterate that soul is a connecting function that gives an individual a sense of meaningful connection beyond oneself, or at least the possibility of such a connection. Michelle described the soul as "a commissure, that umbilical cord with the collective unconscious". As Michelle considered these ideas in the context of her own near death experience, Michelle indicated that this definition was very consistent with her observations. She indicated, "I had a feeling of greater depth of meaning for things than I would have ordinarily, in consensual reality". This was evident when I read Michelle's journals. She has spent a great deal of time analyzing her experience in an effort to gain insight into her recollections, experiences and the dreams surrounding her illness. Through her analysis, Michelle expects to provide meaning to her near death experience from both a rational and spiritual framework.

In her attempt to differentiate spirit and soul, interestingly, Michelle indicated that she was somewhat uncomfortable with the term soul as it carries a religious connotation with it. She felt spirituality had a broader, more secular connotation and that this may be easier for some people to accept. The themes Michelle focused on connected to spirit included: spirit as a process of individuation, the concept of peak experiences and the concept of transcendence.

For Michelle, spirit had two connotations. The first definition she relayed was spirit meaning a quality of personality or a quality of behavior, as in "she has lots of spirit". The second definition was spirit as an object or noun. As she contemplated spirit, she indicated:

> The quality of spirit--I think if Jung can call a soul a function or a quality, then we might look at spirit and try some of these models on it. Rather than being an it, mightn't it be a process, mightn't it be a stage? What else could it be? Because you have to rationalize away the idea that the same word is used for both the quality and the thing. What do they have in common? Are they the same word or from the same word? Does one show the quality that the archetype of the spirit would demonstrate? I don't know. But, it seems to me that this would lend itself very well to more empirical study.

Michelle explained that just as Jung's descriptions of soul allowed us to view soul as a connecting function conveying meaning, spirit might be imagined as a process as well. As she contemplated spirit, Michelle indicated that she could see the transcendent aspects of spirit as they related to her own near death experience. Although difficult to characterize, Michelle indicated that many of her experiences of "altered state" in the hospital had a transcendent quality to them.

Contemplating this transcendent characteristic, Michelle associated spiritual experiences with peak experiences one sometimes encounters in the performing arts. Michelle indicated that as a young woman she had been a dancer. She indicated that often people in the arts experience a performance that "takes you to a different level." Her description of the experience highlighted these characteristics: "everything is right…balance was perfect…you become one with the music…while you are somewhere else, you're having a peak experience." Michelle believed this experience was qualitatively different and important, and was the most distinct experience she could find that might describe this aspect of spirit.

For Michelle, spiritual journey related to a sense of mission and the process of individuation. Although Michelle did not complete any journaling during her participation in the research project, she did allow me to read her personal journal from when she was ill. Although too private to include in this research, she detailed at length her journey back and forth between what she called "consensual reality" and the altered reality of her illness. When she spoke about her illness, she indicated:

> I had an illness that was deep and long and provided me with a rather unique experience that was very bizarre and I came out of that saying what on earth happened? What's going on here? My experience and everybody else's was so different. What do you call it? And so that started a search for meaning. What happened and what did it mean? How does this affect the concept I had of life, death, and our purpose in the universe…all of the big questions?

As Michelle described her academic research on near death experiences, there was an underlying need to find meaning and purpose within her own experience. At the same time, from a cognitive perspective, Michelle also needed to be able to label or classify the experience rationally. Although she recognized that she was embarking on a personal journey, Michelle commented that this journey was not familiar to her and that she found it difficult to express the nature of the experience or define the concepts. She indicated:

> People say you were spared for a purpose—what is that purpose? You know, I keep thinking, well, maybe I can make a contribution but it's not the be all and end all as far as I'm concerned. I'm not here to make the contribution or to find my purpose because I can't really buy that, that I have a purpose at all. I just happen to be here so you do something with your life while you are here…I don't know what anybody would call it or if this has any significance to anybody but me. It really doesn't matter because I could die tomorrow and be perfectly happy about that. I'm not going to be saying oh, please God no, I'm not ready, I haven't completed my mission. It's the path that's the main thing…
>
> It's a very spiritual journey. It's going on in my head and inner soul's mind. A part of me that I've never really spent much time exploring.

Although Michelle sensed that the academy might question her quest to find meaning and purpose in her life (as Michelle sometimes did herself), she felt it was important to include these questions within the framework of her doctoral dissertation and envelope her spiritual journey within her academics.

Gail

Gail is a woman in her early thirties. She was born and raised in South Africa. As a person of "mixed race", Gail and her family experienced many hardships under the old apartheid regime. Gail completed an education degree in South Africa and was teaching elementary school prior to her move to Canada. Gail also became aware of my research through the graduate studies listserv and after determining that she met the research criteria and could commit to the research timeframes, volunteered to participate in the project. Gail spoke candidly about the traumas she suffered under the apartheid regime, the impact that the new anti-apartheid government had on her, and the reasons for her move to Canada to complete a Master's degree. During her interviews and within her journals, Gail details her journey of "self actualization"; in her search for meaning and purpose, Gail also speaks to the spiritual transformation of her homeland.

In order to fully comprehend her definition of spirituality, Gail felt that it was important that I first understand that spirit and soul were interconnected in her mind. Acknowledging this, she also felt it was necessary that I understand her thinking on soul before she could speak about other aspects of spirituality. Gail used four descriptive themes to describe soul. These included soul as a connection to a higher power, soul as a bond to family, the belief that soul emerges in our depth, and the concept of soulful experiences. Gail's initial description of soul comes from a journal item she decided to read to me. She indicates:

> My soul is where I start out as a baby, when I become aware of my existence, when I can interpret things and respond to the way I interpret them. It embodies everything that I am—and that to me is as far as I will go if pushed for a definition. It's just me. It's everything. It encapsulates my whole existence, whether it be my physical world, whether it be my mental world and whether it be my interpretation of my physical world—that's the way I see it. It emerges or shows itself, I become aware of it in the depth in which I present something. The depth or lack of depth is whether the soul emerges. I believe everybody has a soul.

Gail identified that her religious upbringing had an impact on her definition of soul and indicated "my religion tells me I do have a soul, which stays behind when I leave. I guess that's a way of my family having some comfort that I'm still with them while I'm not really physically with them." Gail's connections to family played a key role in many of her stories and helped her to establish her philosophy of self and her concept of spirituality. This becomes most apparent when Gail positions spirit within the context of her personal journey towards self-actualization. She speaks to this later in this chapter.

Woven into her discussion of spirituality, Gail makes two important comments relating to how she represents and recognizes soul in her life. The first point has to do with her personal struggles with self-esteem and self-concept. As she tells her story, Gail comes to the realization that "when you accept in total what you see, and you feel okay with all of that--all of those imperfections, then you have really connected with your soul." As an educator, Gail now tries to incorporate some of her struggles and personal learnings into her teaching style. She indicates that soul is an important addition to her teaching style commenting that:

> …it comes from that depth, the peak that I give people into my life, for whatever experience I'm relating to them. I not only want to give them the content, but the way the content affected me, the way I saw it. The way I experienced it.

Gail's last comments related to soul had to do with soulful experiences. Gail described these experiences as being very powerful. She gave two examples, the first being her lifelong enjoyment of music, the second being her role as an educator. When she spoke about her music, Gail indicated:

> Depth comes through when I sing something. I come from a very musical family…When I sing for an audience it's not for any specific person or people in the audience, I want to express it with so much emotion that it overcomes me. The connection I make comes from my soul.

Gail identified similar experiences in her role as an educator. Experiences that provided depth, meaning, and a sense of connection that she identified as soulful. As she described this experience, she commented that "when you are confronted with fears and really intense feelings, the soul comes to the fore and you connect so big time".

As Gail moved on to discuss her understanding of the concept of spirit, she associated spirit to her own journey of self-actualization. Within this framework, the themes that Gail explained included the notion of transcending self, a search for deeper meaning, and the passion of spirit. Gail began by indicating that:

> Spirituality for me is: I penetrate the physical boundaries. I go beyond that. I look for deeper meaning and the perceptions of those deeper meanings make us more flexible. It makes us more flexible, more accommodating, and more approachable.

As Gail spoke of her own journey, she spoke often of her life back in South Africa and her struggles under apartheid. She recognized the theme of transcendence in her own life and that of her father. Gail indicates:

> Much of what you wanted to be, depended on so many things—resources, opportunities, which were limited as I was growing up. The added thing was the achievement of my siblings around me.... I could never surface from there.... But the one thing that stands out really strong is my father's influence. Because dad is a very strong person. The thing I admire about him is the fact that he grew up in darkest Africa. His times of being an adult and a kid were the worst times of the system. And yet, he could simply rise above that and not be a bitter person. The way he would present things, or he would listen to me, or would comment on things about me—was always positive, optimistic—all of those doubts I used to have, he used to simply just wipe away with his hands and that gradually became internalized. If I had listened to his voice with a bit more interest when I was younger, maybe I would have surfaced sooner.

When revealing her personal journey, Gail recounted experiences and reflected on her struggle for self-actualization—for example, her comment above indicating "maybe I would have surfaced sooner". Gail's shyness, her inability to excel in school, and her desire to perform better than her siblings are common childhood memories for many. Unfortunately, a large number of her insecurities were rooted in the apartheid regime. These adversities included racial discrimination, assaults by the police state, poverty and a constant fear for herself and her family.

As Gail describes her development and growth, we see the development and self-actualization of an insecure, troubled girl, to a fully empowered woman free from the control of a violent, discriminatory and abusive state. Through her struggle, Gail found purpose for her own work:

> I felt I'd lost out a lot over the years for being so empty and doing things and reacting dramatically. Now, liking what I do is such an optimum thing that I want others to be able to have the same thing. That's why, especially at home, where kids live to survive the day--I want it to be different for them now. They need to see that their place on earth is a meaningful place and not just to grow up and go through the motions....

Gail expands on this change of attitude and how this relates to her personal journey now:

> When I started out in the teaching environment, I was just going through the motions. Teaching scholarships were available…very easily for coloured students. So I just took it, because the government paid for teachers schools. And I was teaching because it was there. It's different now. I want to go back and work with those kids, and I want to feel in a way that what I've done there is something they couldn't do without. I was teaching initially because I just wanted to get the kids from grade one to grade two--but not any more. Now, to me the child must like what he does. He must want to do a project given to him because it will benefit him in the long run. I want to transfer my feeling good about what I do, liking

> what I do, over to the kids. So that they don't see school as a mundane thing anymore....
>
> I want to help the kids make connections...the ultimate aim for me is to, because my life was so empty, in essence, apart from the work I had to do, that the meaning I find in what I do now, I want to transfer that. I want to become intoxicated. People must see their worlds differently because they've been in contact with me. That sounds so arrogant, but ...that's my aim. People must find meaning in their lives now.

Gail's move to Canada provided her with new tools to transcend her personal meanings. She describes this change:

> Rather than [Gail] the non-white South African coming to Canada for the first time and having to fit in, I see myself now as me, the person with skills first, before anything else—if at all I look at anything else. And that to me is self-acceptance. In a spiritual sense, I identify myself differently--in a much more positive way, in a much more constructive way. My aim is constructive, not destructive. That to me is how I see myself. And defining myself differently after having been here for a year and having all those transitions, to me is the ultimate achievement that I've done, which I connect with the higher being at the same time.

Gail's struggle to find meaning and purpose in her life and her progress towards self-actualization are the themes she expressed when she described the theme of journey. For Gail, life is the journey and her experience attests to the stamina of the human spirit to overcome adversity. Gail's description of journey ends with:

> To me, it's like you never quite get there. But it doesn't mean that you're worse off or your environment is negative. On the contrary, because it's a continuous journey, the journey becomes lighter; the journey becomes more optimistic, more positive as you go along...it's a continuous thing for me. You never really arrive. The way you reflect on your experiences starts with your soul. That dictates the depth with which you will perceive them and naturally, the way you present yourself to people outside. The essence of one's being is really to me the ultimate spiritual experience.

Donald

Donald is a man in his mid thirties, born and raised in Alberta. He has an undergraduate degree in the social sciences. Donald learned of my research through his contact with a student colleague in my Masters program. After confirming that he fit the research criteria, Donald volunteered as a participant.

Donald spent most of his early career working in the human services field. He has also dedicated part of his career to working in underdeveloped countries through his involvement in projects such as Canada World Youth. Donald attributes much of his worldview to these experiences. Donald indicated that his spirituality is linked to his academic development and he spoke candidly of how education opened his eyes to "different realities" and helped him embark on his own spiritual journey. Prior to being interviewed, Donald had decided to fulfil a lifelong dream of becoming a radio announcer. He had just completed his coursework and started his new career. He described his recent experience with the adult education system as discouraging. Throughout his story, Donald discusses his different academic experiences and their connection to his spiritual journey. Donald also speaks about his fight against discrimination based on his sexual orientation and how religion can be used as a tool of discrimination and oppression.

Donald's first comments about spirituality helped set the tone for his views on spirit and soul. Donald felt that it was important that I understand that his belief system did not allow him to give over control of his life to some higher power. Donald used the term "agency" to describe this sense of power over one's own destiny. Donald indicated:

> It's interesting when you talk spirituality and religion—some people interweave the terminology, I don't. For me there's a definite distinction between religion and spirituality. I'm one who likes to take control of my life and set goals and achieve them and I feel that I'm in charge of my destiny. I don't throw up my hands and say, okay, this is done because of the higher powers. It's kind of like—no, I made a decision in my life and I'm going to go on making that decision.

As Donald discussed his perception of spirituality, he alluded to his personal battles with organized religion and how these battles affected his perspectives on spirituality and spiritual practice. Donald distinguished between religion and spirituality by indicating:

> My spirituality isn't organized as I look down my street and see the United Church, which I was brought up in, it's very liberal—but it's still structured, it's still organized, people still attend on a Sunday. For me, my spirituality encompasses my whole life and I don't have to be around people who validate what I believe in. I've come to that point through my spirituality. I respect and love who I am and I also respect and love who you are. There may be a point where we totally disagree on religion and/or spirituality, however I respect you enough to agree to disagree…

A comment Donald makes in his journal sums up this concept:

> Not being steadfast in my own religious doctrine, education facilitated a new awakening within myself to explore other avenues of my "religious" being. After some time, I came to realize that "religious" was not who I was, but more spiritual. For me, religious was being organized; I wanted something less structured, more holistic. I did not accept the spiritual world on faith, but organized it and restructured it conceptually to meet my own personal needs.

Donald spoke candidly about religious doctrine and his rationale for rejecting organized religion. As a gay man, Donald experienced discrimination and abuses that he believed were entrenched in religion. He indicated that people often quoted the bible to him in defense of their prejudice. In order to defend himself, Donald chose to become more informed through what he describes as "bible study". He indicates:

> It's interesting because I also do a lot of bible study. Because I see it as a tool of repression and I've learned…that to work within the oppressive confines, you have to understand it…to fight back and to really understand it, understand your oppressor, you have to understand the language. So that was kind of like—learn it and understand what they are saying. So I thought—to understand why people hated me based on what was said in the bible, I should read the bible; and I still do. And it's also a part of my spiritual side, because there are good things in the bible. However, they're taken out of context.

As Donald tackled the topic of spirit, he emphasized three points: that spirit is omnipresent and omnipotent, that spirituality is very ethereal, and finally that within the context of spirit, he still had "agency and power" in his life.

Donald's initial description of spirit was vague. He indicated "my spirit is my spirituality and my spirituality is my spirit". As he developed his thoughts, he suggested that the concept of spirit is abstract, ethereal and difficult to describe. He indicates:

> Spirit is energy... there is energy all around us…I see my spirit as being part of the energy that I'm surrounded with on a daily basis…my spirit is non-tangible. It's pliable. It's omnipresent, omnipotent. It's everywhere. That energy that I have in my spirit is expressed through my own personality and who I am. At the end of the day, I just don't die. The energy I have, the spirit that I have within myself will leave and go elsewhere; where it goes, I don't know.

Later in this interview, Donald discussed his own spiritual practice and continued with this description of spirit:

> The topic of spirituality is very ethereal…there's nothing tangible about it

> for me, the only tangible things would be words on a paper…the printed word guides me to myself. It doesn't guide me in a direction, but guides me back into myself.

Donald's definition of spirit, his spiritual journey and his life narrative were woven together in his interviews and journal. As Donald's narrative unfolded, so did the themes he felt were important to the concept of spiritual journey. These experiences included both educational opportunities and work. As he comments on these experiences, Donald develops his concept of spirituality:

> It was because of working in the inner city that spirituality meant something to me. Working with people from diverse backgrounds and interacting with those living life on the edge. It made me thankful for the little I had. I became a lot more humble and holistic…it was there that I found myself and appreciated the doors that university had opened for me. That's evolved through my experiences in working with different cultures and having a great experience travelling and viewing the world from a different perspective. Seeing different religions and how people operate in different cultures solidified what I needed to stay healthy and how I perceived the world…

Donald associated these experiences to his spiritual journey and indicated that they helped him develop a more holistic worldview. He explained the connection to spirituality:

> …at the beginning it was school, when I first started going to university and realizing—there's a lot of stuff I don't know. There's a lot of things that I'd taken for granted and didn't bother questioning because it was reflected everywhere that I looked and it was reflected in everything I had read—at least up to that point. There was no other view until I went into school and started reading all of these different views…and getting involved in different organizations, with different people, with different perspectives on the world. Not saying that they had to validate my own ontological perspective and who I was. But just their perspective and teaching me about different religions, different spiritual ways of being, helped me on my journey….

Donald described his recent decision to change careers as a major turning point in his life that forced him to focus on his spiritual needs. As he described his fears related to this decision, he reflected on the struggles that he had been experiencing at work. Donald acknowledged that he lacked balance in his life in terms of the four areas he identified as being important-- spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical well-being. Donald commented:

> I can tell a lot if three of the four have been neglected. But that's also part and parcel of things going on in my life. Like I said before, when things become chaotic or in a turmoil or you're not focused—things go by the wayside. Since I've made some decisions in my life—on what I'm going to do and where I'm going—things become a lot clearer now. I don't feel that I'm in a whirlwind, with things spinning around and my life going nowhere. I have a definite goal and a definite vision and all of a sudden other things seem to fall into place.

Donald went on to describe this struggle to "find himself" and the difficulties he experienced leaving his career and family to return to school:

> I would say that when I made decisions in my life on what I was going to do, the others fell into place. I wasn't neglecting them. I was kind of like putting them off before. I'm not too sure—maybe that's a question I can't answer, is how come the spiritual side all of a sudden became more tangible…
>
> I had negative self-talk--that pathological critic inside me. Having lack of respect for management and for the company was overwhelming the other side and clouding my perspective on who I really am. Having those negative thoughts and feelings just isn't who I am…
>
> It was totally amazing when I came to the decision—I'm out of here, work is work and it doesn't rule my life. Then all of a sudden the spiritual side just seemed to fall into place—maybe a higher power has guided me. Acknowledging that that side of me is also one that has to be worked on.

In his journaling, Donald describes a "spiritual re-birth" resulting from his return to school:

> Going back to school, I had to face many internal fears. Quitting my job, living on a student's income, venturing into uncharted personal waters. Facing a new culture I was not experienced with—having feelings of intimidation and inadequacy. Questioning my choice to go back to school—at first it was not a good experience. A way of life I needed time to adjust to. Death of an old way of life/person. Decay of an old way of thinking. Fertilization of a new mind and spiritual being. Gestation of a new awakening as a person. Re-birth as a whole being—in body and mind. It took time and perseverance. The period of self-doubt bloomed into a student ready to meet the challenges of higher education head on. The scholastic learning curve was steep but the drive of the spiritual warrior was unwavering. It was confidence I found in myself that enabled me to continue on in school.

Within our discussions, Donald spoke of the concept of spiritual work and spiritual practice. As he described his spiritual practice, Donald emphasized the importance that education and life experience played in his spiritual journey. A major component of Donald's spiritual practice was his belief in the benefits of journaling. Donald describes this:

> I can only say there's a beginning and that was when I started years ago with Canada World Youth and it seems to have evolved and gone on. When I was first starting journaling, it was kind of like a retrospective of my days events and very linear and left brain and then I got into other things, more talking about my emotions and who [Donald] is and not what he did during the day but, his thoughts and his feelings and if he's scared or he's happy, if he's lonely, if he's sad… and how are you doing? And what are you doing? And how are you treating people? And how are you treating yourself.
>
> That's the tool that keeps me centred and focused on myself when I'm feeling frayed and scattered, or overwhelmed, or feeling really negative about myself and about work… I guess to keep me grounded and keep me

> focused on what my spirituality is. Journaling is part of it…. It is just to realize that in the big scheme of things, I'm just [Donald] and there's a lot of stuff out there that I can't control and have control over.

As Donald described his daily practice of journaling, he commented on the entry he made just prior to one of the interviews:

> I will start with writing my journal this morning, it's kind of for me a healthy thing to put into words and also visualize what's going on in one's head. And I kind of look at that as my spiritual side, which tends to get neglected at times--especially when there are other things going on in my life. It's kind of taken for granted I guess because it's there, you just have to fall back on it, right?
>
> But I find that to really be in touch with one's self, you have to work at it like anything else. And, you can equate it also to religion, it's always around you, it's there--the signs and symbols within our culture. But it's also something that has to be worked at—if in fact that's going to church or doing bible studies or whatever. So, for me it's just sitting down and reflecting and making sure that I'm in touch with what my beliefs are on the spiritual side of me and what I need to keep myself healthy at a number of levels—spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically.

In describing his spiritual practice, Donald comments that "it's taken me a long time to get to the point of finding out what are the foundations of who [Donald] is and that is twofold through education and spirituality". As he describes his journey, Donald reflects that his spiritual practice created opportunities for:

> …opening my mind to other perspectives through books and education but also giving me the focus to continue to pursue something that is the core of who I am, and that's my spiritual being on different levels—the intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual side…

Donald had difficulty describing the concept of soul and limited this discussion to some insights on his practice of reading the bible. As mentioned earlier, Donald viewed the bible as an object of repression, but he spoke fondly of a family bible that had been passed down to him from his grandmother. This bible represented Donald's connection to the past and he spoke about the connection to soul. As he commented on why he continues to read the bible, Donald indicated:

> It's also out of respect to my grandmother, because it was hers and she had given it to me—there's a poem in the back, so it's also being connected to her. It pulls me toward the bible. There are certain things I keep in my bible, wedding invitations…things that are very precious to me. It's a safe place. I respect it and read it. However, it doesn't run my life.

Donald acknowledged the importance of family in his life but could not clearly identify how this related to the concept of soul. When asked to try to differentiate the concept, Donald moved back into discussions of spirituality and spirit—in the end, never clearly defining soul.

Common Threads

Any attempt to try to bring these four stories together to form a consensual perspective on spirituality, spirit or soul would only do a disservice to their individual stories. Instead, I will simply comment on some of the similarities and differences that arise. The themes that develop will provide an opportunity to build a framework for understanding the experiences of the participants. In the last chapter, I will connect these themes to the literature.

During the interviews, a common theme to all of the participants was the difficulty they experienced describing and defining the concepts. This was not surprising to me, given the numinous character of spirituality and the personal perspective that each of us attributes to this topic. Interestingly, all of the participants spoke of a major life event that they associated to their interest in spirituality. For each, the event was significant enough to cause him or her to re-evaluate their current situation and ultimately caused each participant to embark on a path to establish greater meaning and purpose in their life. All of the participants saw this process of re-evaluation and their attempts to understand their experiences from a different perspective as an integral component of their spiritual journey. The last theme that all participants spoke of was the concept of soul or spirit being a connecting factor in their lives—the connection seemed to differ for each of the participants, for some the connection was to a higher power, for others the connection was to family, friends or the greater humanity.

Although not all of the participants spoke of these concepts in the same manner, other similarities among at least three of the participants were concepts of transcendence and discussions around peak experiences. Donald did not speak about either of these concepts but they were common to the other participants.

Concepts that were distinct to individual participants but still important to understanding spirituality were the concepts of "self work", self-actualization, personal agency and power, and service to humanity. Although not common to all of the participants, these concepts allowed individual participants to provide insight into the uniqueness of their personal journey as it related to the themes of spirit, soul, and spirituality. These themes begin to capture each participant's understanding of spirituality.

As we move to the next chapter, we examine spirituality within the context of adult learning. As mentioned earlier, heuristic methodology, by definition, enables the researcher to discover or create new understandings. Although the participants may not have initially linked spirituality to education, they were able to offer insights from their experiences as educators or students. These insights allow us to consider why there is a need to include spirituality in education and how educators might achieve this goal.

Chapter IV: Spirituality and Education

> Spiritual experiences are those which give us new expansive perceptions about our relationship to the cosmos, which allow us to glimpse a reality beyond the logical, rational, physically bound world we usually consider to be our home. These new perceptions are naturally accompanied by strong emotions of fear, joy, hope, and even despair. Our thinking may become confused, disjointed, and at the same time expansive... we may create whole new patterns of understanding from this seemingly mental chaos... When we undergo such experiences, our values change. We become more open to 'transpersonal' values: ethical, aesthetic, heroic, humanitarian, altruistic, and creative....
>
> (Molly Brown, In V. Griffen, 1993, p. 122)

Introduction

Although it may not have been part of a participant's initial depiction of spirituality, all of the participants were aware of the fact that my research would examine the concept of spirituality within an educational framework. This is where heuristic thinking became important for me as a researcher. Heuristics, by definition, are tools for discovering or creating new understandings. Heuristic inquiry is a method of looking at data in a continuous process of creating new understandings, to seek the essence of a phenomenon. This attempt to develop the concept of spirituality within an educational context created an opportunity to dialogue with the participants about their insights regarding spirituality and adult and higher education. Within these discussions, participants were able to offer their observations on how education and spirituality link, what role educators should play in creating opportunities for spiritual development within educational institutions, and the purpose of curriculum development as it relates to spirituality. Chapter 3 provided an opportunity to examine the three themes that developed within the context of spirituality: spirit, soul and journey. Table 1 also outlined the subthemes that developed in relation to the topic of spirituality and education.

In this chapter, I describe each participant's awareness of the role of spirituality within the adult and higher education context. Within the chapter, each participant's understanding of the theme is presented. Once again, a substantial portion of the information that is provided in this chapter is through quotations in order to allow the participant's own perspective to be communicated. After detailing each participant's thoughts, the final section of this chapter will identify some of the themes that arise that might guide educators in their attempts to incorporate spirituality into academic settings. These themes are revisited in the last chapter.

Kate

As Kate contemplated the concept of spirituality within an educational context, one of her underlying beliefs was that "education is bereft of any sense of spirituality." As she described her educational experiences, Kate indicated that although she might not have recognized the need at the time, the academy should have afforded her more opportunities to focus on personal holistic living and promoted a sense of spirituality. Kate characterized her educational experience as unhealthy and stressful.

As she contemplated the role spirituality might play within an educational setting, she indicated, "at a certain point, even if you have everything, you find that there can still be a gnawing emptiness inside of you. And that emptiness I believe can only be filled by spirituality and by a sense of meaning." Kate then went on to comment on the role spirituality plays for her in her work environment and commented:

> Does teaching spirituality have a role in education? I think it must. You know, I've been out of the education system for so long but I believe that there's a role for me to do it, even in my job where it's probably not even as safe to do that—because, realistically, who am I to impose my views on others when I'm an employer and these people are governed by human resource policies and codes that would dictate that if anything, I keep my personal views out of work.... I believe that the most effective leadership is guided by soul, by spirit, so I use two different things—my values, and principles that transcend policies. It has to do with the fact that we are still human beings working together. There is a connection that should go beyond work if we are going to see—not just good results, but the most outstanding results. And, it also has to do with how people treat one another. I don't think that policies tell people how to treat one another. I think treating people in the most spiritual way, and leading that way, and setting that example is in itself going to be much more effective. So, if I believe that in my workplace spirituality has a place, then I definitely believe that it has a place in academia and in education.

As Kate went on to describe how she thought spirituality might be incorporated into an educational context, she struggled with how an educator might bring a spiritual perspective to their classroom without imposing their own beliefs on students. She feared that academia might try to move to what she called a "spiritual curriculum" and that this would be antithetical to the development of an environment that promoted people's spiritual side. She commented:

> How to do that, without imposing your views on someone in their own search? I don't know how you do that, other than maybe just encouraging the search—like encouraging the personal search and giving people an opportunity to do that within their work and not shutting them down. I think it takes a rare person to do that. I think it takes courage to allow that,

> and do that in an academic environment. I don't know how many people are that courageous. It would be hard. So, yes, I believe it has a role, but I don't know how we could be doing that more, other than just encouraging a personal journey.

As much as Kate recognized the importance of including spiritual content in education, she was resistant to the concept of "spiritual educators", indicating that:

> I start to resist because I think—it would take someone extraordinarily gifted to allow everyone to learn their own definition of spirituality, without imposing theirs. I don't even know if I could do that—even though I think about this every second day, I don't know if I could do that without it being this version, my version.

As Kate described her spiritual practice and her efforts to bring a sense of spirit to her work environment, she offered insight into how this might be accomplished in an educational context. She commented:

> I believe I'm perceived to be a spiritual leader. Now, what they would say is that I have integrity. I have integrity, I'm honest, and I care deeply. To me, all of those things are how I try and live my life spiritually, but no one would ever know that I believe that I have an effect on people's spirits and that I take that seriously.

As Kate applied this philosophy to education, she developed the concept of a "spiritual teacher" and described the roles and responsibilities this person might assume:

> I suppose that the best teachers, the most gifted teachers, are going to be the ones that are able to at least steer you and to allow it, number one—to allow it and be open to those questions. To be able to hear the question and know that—I don't know that their role will always be to provide answers, but to be knowledgeable enough and open enough to be able to help guide students to their own answers, by being open to their search… I mean just being open to broadening the curriculum, broadening their search and for them to do some independent study would be part of it. That's very practical though.

One of the last things that Kate identified from her spiritual journey was the fact that at different times in our lives we all will require a spiritual teacher. This person can help us find focus, tempo, and make sure we are learning only what we are able to handle at that time. She indicated that you only have spiritual growth if you have spiritual practice and when we are ready, we will find a spiritual teacher who will help us with our spiritual practice. She ends with:

> I believe that it's such an individual, personal, search that there will be such different answers and such different paths that I don't believe any one teacher or guide will have all of those answers.

Michelle

As both a student and an educator, Michelle's educational experiences were positive and she described the academy as welcoming and supportive. Michelle spoke of an on-going connection with educational institutions in both roles. This affinity was an important aspect of Michelle's perception of education, especially after her illness. The sense of community the university provided Michelle with, allowed her to begin the journey of understanding her illness and the opportunity to bring meaning to her experience. Michelle indicated that in order to legitimize her personal search to find meaning and purpose, she needed to believe that her research on near death experiences was both supported and accepted by her colleagues at university. Because the academy was so supportive and provided Michelle with an opportunity to reflect on her experience, she felt encouraged to link her spiritual journey with her rational efforts to explain her illness.

Michelle sometimes provided a dichotomous portrayal of the "university experience" relaying both positive aspects of her experience and warnings of possible stumbling blocks that might impede spiritual development in educational settings. Initially reflecting on the culture of academia, she indicated:

> The university does a pretty good job of brainwashing you in some respects. It does give a common enough experience so that we form a different culture, within the culture. We speak a different language; we have certain rules, rules of argument and disagreement—rules of evidence, if you will, ability to suspend judgement, to an extent—not always, but more than the general public, I would think. I can't say the general public have had that experience, or have lived in that social or cultural environment of colleges and universities.

As Michelle went on to describe her own experience in university and the support she received from faculty and peers, she commented:

> They've given me a lot of time. They really have not pressured me. And I kind of expected, and I ask for pressure and put up my own hurdles in the lack of it. Sometimes I'm at a loss because of the lack of structure and pressure. But I realize the wisdom of that too, because I do have to find my own way.... I am learning, daily. I learn a tremendous amount of stuff. I'm thinking all of the time. I'm dreaming all of the time, and waking up with ideas. I don't execute anything in particular, I'm not productive, but it's happening.

Michelle described the educational process as a normal progressive experience and that students naturally will go on to ask new questions, which increases their hunger for knowledge. She indicated:

> Once you reach a certain level, you've got to go to the next one. That's the rule.... School, of course it would come to mind that that's a good place to search for answers. I don't know if I was somebody else, if it would—for

me, it goes without saying.

When Michelle went on to describe her own teaching experiences, she described some of the conditions and concepts that she felt were important within the context of spiritual education. She spoke of the need to ask questions and the importance of encouraging students to ask questions as well. As she described this viewpoint, she indicated:

> I really had some incredible experiences teaching, particularly adults because of the nature of the questions and the discussion sometimes. You figure you're on to something that you haven't thought of before. It's not mundane. That was an important part of teaching.

Interestingly enough, although Michelle was very positive about her experience in education and the support that she received from academia, when questioned on the link between education and spirituality, Michelle was sceptical about whether educational institutions in Alberta would encourage these kind of debates. She closes with this comment:

> I know that you have to keep asking how it relates to education and I know that the "correct" answer is—the advice everybody's going to give you—and that is use a broad interpretation. It's very relevant, but anyone that wants to narrow it to the narrowest, or to the Alberta viewpoint of higher education, is barking up the wrong tree. This isn't an issue that speaks of community narrowness. You're not going to foster this type of exploration in a population and expect them to go out and produce more widgets.

Gail

Gail's experiences with the education system were both positive and negative. As she contemplated the notion of spirituality and education, she most clearly identified the role she hoped to undertake as an educator. Gail described this role and related it to the social context of her homeland of South Africa. She indicated:

> People must see their worlds differently because they've been in contact with me. That sounds so arrogant but that's my aim. People must find meaning in their lives now. Much of that meaning was taken away because of limitations of many things in the country…That's why, especially at home, where kids live to survive the day, I want it to be different for them now. They need to see that their place on earth is a meaningful place and not just to grow up and go through the motions of different stages of one's life….

Although Gail clearly identified her reasons for attending university and the role she hoped to assume upon returning to South Africa, she did not view learning as strictly an intellectual process. Gail identified the need for education to move beyond the rational. As Gail described her own experience with education, she indicated:

> It's definitely much more than a means to an end for me. Apart from equipping me with the necessary skills, it also allows me to pit myself against the elements of the storm. I scraped through school and I was told that I must never worry about university, and I believed that. But when I discounted that, I proved people different, I proved myself different. Apart from the skills I get with this education, it's my experiences during my education that are moulding me—my interactions with my profs, the battle with myself.

Gail's view of education had now changed. As she describes this change, she indicates:

> Education allows you to focus on your strengths and not to elevate previously elevated weaknesses. Education gives you more than just the book knowledge, it exposes you to opportunities, to find angles, to problem solve, and knowledge brings that about. If you have limited knowledge, you can't see more angles, you can't think of different angles to approach the problem. It provides different ways and angles to look at things, and thereby changes your cognition about them.

Gail was able to acknowledge her changed perspective and now felt prepared to take on the challenge of incorporating spirituality into education. She envisions her role as promoting deeper understanding of meaning and purpose with her students. Spirituality is an integral part of Gail's vision and she now hopes to transfer this understanding to her homeland.

Donald

Donald also had positive and negative views of education. He identified the positive effect that education had on him as being the fact that it exposed him to different perspectives. As he described the positive aspects, Donald indicated that:

> Education opened my eyes to the spiritual side of the world. Before that, I only saw one thing and that was based on my own religion—my United religion—that was my reality. I didn't know any better. I wasn't educated enough to critically analyze what I was being taught or question the authority of the bible or of the church. Having gone to school, that opened my eyes to different realities, different spiritual beings, and different religions, which also put into question my own religion and what I liked and didn't like about it.

Although Donald could identify positive experiences within the academy, he also experienced negativity due to the discrimination he often faced as a gay man. He comments on this perpetuation of stereotypes, indicating:

> I'm sitting in a lecture hall and thinking that this is an institution of higher learning, yet, we haven't learned anything. We still continue to perpetuate negative stereotypes.

And yet for him,

> It was the education, it was the knowledge, it was the different

> perspectives from books that got me on my way, and then having the opportunity to, again, get out of my own little box.

Donald felt that his experiences volunteering and working with agencies like Canada World Youth allowed him to further expand his perspective. He described this informal education, indicating that:

> Getting out of the Ivory Tower and going to other places and living with other people and in other cultures also opened me up and I realized how much I didn't learn in school.

In the end, Donald indicated that it was probably the combination of higher education and life experience that allowed him to develop a broader perspective. He described this, saying:

> It was kind of like stepping out of the box—which was also education, because having the door opened to an institution of higher learning and having different ideas and different information, it became a lot clearer. It reinforced my thoughts on why I didn't like organized religion and then also opened my eyes to another aspect of my spiritual being. Opening my mind to other perspectives through books and education but also giving me the focus to continue to pursue something that I believe is the core of who I am, and that's my spiritual being on different levels—the intellectual, emotional, physical and the spiritual side.

As Donald contemplated the connection between spirituality and education within his journal writings, he indicated:

> Being in a so-called liberal environment, it was easier to experience and try new things—question old beliefs…As we experience life, our own spirit grows and develops; changes as we perceive and interact with those around us. University taught me to think, analyze, and question… What are we doing here? There's the existential question that continues to plague humanity.

Donald went on to describe the role that education might play in helping students develop their own spirituality, he indicated:

> One thing education taught me was to think and the spin off from that was to question—question myself—my values, beliefs, and my perceptions of the world. To be truly effective, education has to engage the student in discourse and present various points of view. Not being steadfast in my own religious doctrine, education facilitated a new awakening within myself to explore other avenues of my "religious" being. However, life's best teacher is living and experience all there is. Through experiential activities, learning is two-fold. One, it makes you question yourself and second, it gives you the opportunity to actually experience another reality, a different way of life, a new existence.

Donald concluded this topic with a caution that "education and spirituality can be a volatile combination or an empowering experience". He compared the indoctrination of religious dogma to the demand that educational institutions place on students in terms of uniformity of thinking and behaviour, he indicated:

> Like religions, education's first few years are based on learning theories and not questioning them. Not until one's 3rd or 4th year are students allowed to have an original thought. It can be a one way information system that's structured to maintain the status quo. Questioning a Prof or the Bible's written words are deemed defiant because in the face of the "almighty"—the Prof or "God", we are not worthy.

Donald completes this thought by writing a poem. I've included the poem at the end of this chapter as his warning to students, educators, and educational institutions.

Common Threads

In highlighting the themes the participants developed related to spirituality and education I feel it is important to first identify what some might see as two limitations of the material. First, some of the participants were not educators in a traditional sense and therefore their recommendations arise from personal experiences as students. Their comments should be viewed from this context. Secondly, participants' insights on the theme of spirituality and education were as a result of questions posed by the researcher. Although all of the participants commented on this link, education may not have been a concept they initially linked to spirituality. Having stated these qualifiers outright, the following themes related to spirituality and education were identified by the participants:

1. Educators wanting to encourage spiritual development in their students should be prepared to enter into discourse with students that presents various points of view and provides opportunities to question values, beliefs and personal perceptions;
2. Educators wanting to encourage spiritual development in their students should be open to questions from their students and be able to guide students to their own answers;
3. The academy is a good place to ask questions and search for answers;
4. Educators need to be prepared to move beyond the rational/intellectual and utilize the teaching relationship to help students find meaning and purpose in their life;
5. Educators wanting to encourage spiritual development in their students need to be engaged in their own spiritual development and growth;
6. A sense of community and support are important aspects of the educational environment that can promote spiritual development;

7. Students will find their own spiritual guides when they are ready for them; and,
8. The participants cautioned educators of the potential risk of imposing their personal values or spiritual beliefs on students.

I will review these themes and consider their implications for practice in the last chapter. In the next chapter I present an overview of the research and literature on spirituality. This review creates a context for understanding the research participants' insights and establishes a foundation for linking the various perspectives.

Don't Be a Fool

(Poem Written by Donald)

You're told…
Don't be a fool
Go to school

A cultural institution
A place of social condition

Where you learn
Opportunities at every turn

It's mainstream
You're part of the team

Teachers are the preachers
Students are creatures

You're told…
Grades are number one
You have none

Information flows one way
All you want to do is play

Sit and be quiet
Don't cause a riot

Socialized to be a man
Conditioned to be a woman

A place of conformity
Be part of the majority

Theories lead to
…queries

Education…
Indoctrination…

Church versus state
Destiny or fate

Spread your wings
Grab the golden ring

University…
Spirituality…
Does it reflect your reality?

With your degree
Now you can be…

Pursue your dreams
They have many themes

Settle for nothing less
Than your personal best

You're told…
Go to school
Don't be a fool.

Chapter V: Spirituality in the Literature

> To talk about soul is not necessarily to know it. The more we try to define soul, to elevate it or fasten it down, the more it eludes our grasp. It is the source of all that we are, yet words alone fail in discerning its nature. A soul must be engaged--played with and worked on--not just analyzed, in order to know what it is. Soul speaks to us through dreams, reveals itself by the music, art, and poetry we create and behold. In a work dedicated to exploring the psyche's complexities, I am unable to say what exactly constitutes a soul--yet I know I have one.
>
> (Mark Thompson, 1994, p. 1)

Introduction

In developing this literature review, the advice of Lawrence Locke, Waneen Spirduso and Stephen Silverman has been accepted as a guideline for presenting the material. In their book Proposals That Work, Locke, et al. (1993) indicate that the literature review should focus on two areas: 1. how and why the research question was formulated in the proposed form, and 2. why the proposed research strategy was selected. They indicate that the writer should use "previous work, often some critique of previous work, sometimes some exposition of the broad pattern of knowledge as it exists in the area to appeal for the reader's acceptance of the logic represented in the proposed study" (Locke, et al., p. 72). Therefore, this chapter will attempt to look at the research question, "What is the meaning of spirituality to adult learners and educators?" from this perspective. In order to answer this question, I will begin developing a theoretical framework by examining the concept of spirituality within a larger context. I will then attempt to more clearly define spirituality and frame the concept within an educational context, and finally, move forward to explain the rationale for my research and how the research might advance, refine or add to what is already known about spirituality and adult education.

Theoretical Framework

There has been a growing interest in many social science disciplines to understand and more clearly define the concept of spirituality. We often see the term spirituality used in newspapers and hear the word used freely by media in relationship not only to religious activities but to other areas of everyday life such as spirituality in the workplace, or spirituality in relationship to counselling and therapy. Interestingly, outside of the field of theology, most academic work that focuses on spirituality has grown out of work done in the area of transpersonal psychology. Even within the field of psychology, there has been some difficulty in producing research that would validate the subject's theoretical importance. Mary Lynne Mack (1994) identifies the problem, indicating that "the relative inattention to the study of the spiritual in psychology may be rooted in the profession's historical precedents to dissociate itself from nonempirical philosophical disciplines. This is exacerbated by the fact that the concept itself is dynamic in nature and historically has undergone numerous transformations due to religious institutions, political structures, and social movements" (p. 15). This dilemma holds true for research about spirituality in any discipline.

If we look at some of the early research done in the area of psychology, the work of Carl Jung has been instrumental in exploring and understanding spirituality within the human psyche. Although Jung focused more clearly on the concept of "soul", he did see spirituality as a base for human development. June Singer, in her book Boundaries of the Soul, identifies Jung's interest in spirituality. Singer (1972) indicates that, "for Jung, questions of the spirit were of highest importance. By 'spirit' he did not mean the supernatural, but rather those higher aspirations which are so much a part of man's striving, whether they are expressed in works of art, in service to one's fellow man, or in attempting to understand the workings of nature and her order" (p. 94). Although it would be impossible to do justice to Jungian psychology within the context of this overview, it is important to realize that Jung viewed religion as deriving from the "collective unconscious" and he labelled religiosity as an instinctual aspect of human functioning. Jung's interest in world mythology lead him to discover that within the dreams and fantasies of his clients there was evidence of ancient symbols, images and mythological motifs that the majority of these people had never been exposed to. Because they had not acquired this information within their lifetime, Jung proposed that these motifs must be innate structures inherited by every member of the human race. These primordial images or *archetypes* as Jung called them are common to all people: trans-individual, collective, and transcendent. (Wilber, 1985, p. 125) In order to understand the importance of archetypes within spirituality, we must realize that,

> A basic principle of Jung's approach to religion is that the spiritual

> element is an organic part of the psyche. It is the source of the search for meaning, and it is that element which lifts us above our concern for merely keeping our species alive.... The spiritual element is expressed in symbols, for symbols are the language of the unconscious.... The symbol attracts, and therefore leads individuals on the way of becoming what they are capable of becoming. That goal is wholeness, which is integration of the parts of the personality into a functioning totality. (Singer, p. 392)

Unlike Freud, as a psychologist, Jung did not dismiss spiritual urges as psychological neuroses but rather saw spiritual growth as a component of individuation. The following passage from Mary Lynn Mack (1994) illustrates the importance of this:

> The primary concept in Jung's view of spiritual growth is that of *individuation:* the process of achieving wholeness through synthesis of conscious and unconscious aspects of the self (Corsini & Wedding, 1989). Jung labeled this process of individuation as religious in nature, characterized by human capacity to submit individual ego-will to the will of God through movement from the ego as center of personality to the genuine self as center (Moore, 1988). The self, therefore, is considered the central mechanism involved in the spirituality of the individual and is understood as the God-image within the psyche of each individual. Hence, according to Jung, both psychological and spiritual health depend on an open relationship between conscious and unconscious forces in personality. This open relationship, which is fundamental for the Jungian process of personality integration, is the criterion in discerning genuine spirituality. (pp. 16-17)

Often drawing from Jung's work, several other theorists within the field of psychology developed the concept of spirituality as a process of self-transcendence. These theorists understand growth in the spiritual realm differently from Jung in that "the self is not deified and God is not psychologized" (Mack, p. 17). Within this framework, theorists such as Ken Wilber see the process of spiritual development as ontogenetic and unidirectional toward an ultimate unity (a state of mystical oneness beyond all division and duality). Transcendence involves a disclosure to consciousness of psychic and spiritual potentials that up to that point were present in an immanent but not yet evident way. Transcendence of the ego is an integration process that is achieved through total dependence on God, a higher power or purpose, or both. Wilber himself indicates that the process of transcendence is difficult to understand, but alludes to the fact that this may be a weakness relative to Western culture. Wilber (1985) states that "we have largely lost any direct and socially accessible means to transcendence. The average person will therefore probably listen in disbelief if it is pointed out that he has, nestled in the deepest recesses of his being, a transpersonal self, a self that transcends his individuality and connects him to a world beyond conventional space and time" (p. 123). Wilber (1985) points to the recent resurgence of spirituality in Western culture as an indicator of peoples' desire to find new meaning. As we strive towards what Wilber describes as "unity consciousness", he indicates that we should be aware that:

> As a person takes up the special conditions of a spiritual practice, he will begin to realize, with increasing certainty and clarity, an exasperating but unmistakable fact: nobody wants unity consciousness. At all times we are, in truth, *resisting* unity consciousness, avoiding God, fighting the Tao. It is certain that we are always wave-jumping, that we are always resisting the present wave of experience. But unity consciousness and the present are one and the same thing. To resist one is to resist the other. In theological terms, we are always resisting God's presence, which is nothing but the full present in all its forms. If there is some aspect of life that you dislike, there is some aspect of unity consciousness that you are resisting. Thus we actively, if secretly, deny and resist unity consciousness. The understanding of this secret resistance is the ultimate key to enlightenment. (p. 146)

Both Jungian theory and transcendent models such as Wilber's are transpersonal in the sense that they view transcendence as a developmental transition to a level of experience beyond that centred in the ego or personal self. Having examined the two perspectives it appears that there are some definite differences that may derive, as Wilber states, from the divergence of Eastern and Western thought. If we look at these concepts from an East/West perspective, Wilber's model focuses on the nonduality of the self, the cognitive aspects of self-transcendence, and he describes self-transcendence as a process that develops through enlightenment and sacred wisdom. On the other hand, Jungian and post-Jungian theorists develop the concept of the duality of the self (conscious or unconscious), the interactional aspect of self-transcendence, and maintain that self-transcendence occurs through a restored or redeemed relationship (i.e. reunion of the self with its ground). The continued debate that arises between these two perspectives has been clearly identified by Michael Washburn (1990). He poses several questions for the student of transcendence to consider, including, what exactly the process of spiritual development consists of, whether transcendence is a wholly immanent process or a process that involves contact with transcendent forces, whether transcendence is primarily growth from within or transformation from without, and whether transcendence ultimately leads beyond all selfhood or to a point at which a higher form of selfhood is achieved. These questions continue to stimulate dialogue in the field of transpersonal psychology.

If we move away from the field of psychology, we are able to look at transformational theory from an educational focus; the most significant work that has been done is Jack Mezirow's work in the area of perspective transformation. In describing transformative learning, Mezirow (1995) indicates that "learning which may involve a reassessment of one's self-concept, as is often the case in perspective transformation, is threatening, emotionally charged, and extremely difficult. It is not enough that such transformations effect a cognitive insight; they require a conative and emotional commitment to act upon a new perspective as well" (In Welton, p. 48). Perspective transformation as defined by Mezirow can occur through transformation of meaning schemes or an epochal transformation triggered by a life crisis or major transition. Mezirow (1991) indicates that perspective transformation involves eleven sequential stages, including:

> (1) a disorienting dilemma, (2) self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame, sometimes turning to religion for support, (3) a critical assessment of assumptions, (4) recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and others have negotiated a similar change, (5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions, (6) planning a course of action, (7) acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans, (8) provisionally trying out new roles, (9) renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships, (10) building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, and (11) a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (pp. 168-169)

As we read Mezirow's work, we begin to recognize that perspective transformation is individualistic, linear, rational, and cognitive in nature. Elizabeth Tisdell (2000) comments that "Mezirow's theory is primarily driven by rationality; he does not discuss transformation as spirituality and neglects the role of unconscious thought processes in learning" (p. 312). Although Mezirow asserts the dominance of the rational and the marginality of the extrarational, he does make reference to the concept of "discernment". Robert Boyd and J. Gordon Myers (1988) indicate that "discernment enables us to be in union with ourselves and our world. Critical reflectivity leads to personal clarification based upon a more accurate explanation of the details of life. Discernment looks to the creation of personal vision or personal meaning by enhancing the individual's capacity to imagine what it is to be human based upon a tacit knowledge of one's relationship to Self and world" (p. 275). Unfortunately, Mezirow's work does seem to focus on instrumental, dialogic, and emancipatory learning domains without clearly establishing how meaning and purpose contribute to transformation from a spiritual perspective. Mezirow's (1989) own comments about adult education point to both the strengths and weaknesses of his framework. He indicates that:

> Adult education goals like social action, intellectual development, cognitive and moral development, self-actualization, democratic participation or liberation, and social and political goals like freedom, liberty, equality, justice, human rights and others are all of great importance, but they are only instrumental. From my perspective, their common purpose is to foster the conditions and abilities necessary for an adult to understand his or her experience through free, full participation in critical discourse. Reflective dialogue represents the most distinctively human attribute, the capacity to learn the meaning of one's own experience and to realize the value potential in nature through communication. (p. 174)

Having provided a brief theoretical background to some of the work being done in the area of spirituality, it seems important to now focus on the term spirituality itself and develop a clearer understanding of this somewhat numinous term. We will return to the theoretical framework again when we discuss the significance of the research proposal.

Defining Spirituality

As mentioned earlier, the word *spirituality* has taken on a popular yet ambiguous character. People use the term freely when they discuss concepts like "breaking the human spirit" or "the spirit of the times". We also hear the terms spiritual and spirituality used by both religious and secular people to refer to human experience and personal growth. Discussions involving spirituality quite often get intertwined with the word *soul* and even academic writings often use the terms interchangeably. So what is spirituality?

From his readings of ancient literature, Thomas Moore (1996) in his book The Education of the Heart, helps differentiate the concept of spirituality from the concept of soul. He indicates that:

> Although the issue is subtle and complicated, in general terms we can see the spirit as focused on transcending the limits of our personal, time-bound, concrete life. The spirit is fascinated by the future, wants to know the meaning of everything, and would like to stretch, if not break altogether, the laws of nature through technology or prayer. It is full of ideals and ambition, and is a necessary rewarding and inspiring aspect of human life.
>
> The soul is, as Jung says, the "archetype of life," embedded in the details of ordinary, everyday experience. In the spirit, we try to transcend our humanity; in the soul, we try to enter our humanity fully and realize it completely. Egged on by spiritual ambition, a person might imitate the old saints and go into the desert or the forest to be cleansed and discover a high level of consciousness. Full of soul, a person might endure the highs

> and lows of family life, marriage, and work, motivated by a compassionate and hungry heart. (p. 12)

Moore's description of the nature of spirit and soul draw back to the theoretical frameworks proposed by Jung, Wilber and other transpersonal psychologists. He helps us distinguish the differences between the two and alludes to their role in personal development and adult education.

As mentioned in chapter one, the clearest definition that I have been able to find for the concept of spirituality from a research framework is from the study done by David Elkins, et al (1988). They define spirituality as "a way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life, and whatever one considers the Ultimate" (p. 10). They go on to identify nine components of spirituality including:

1. *Transcendent dimension.* The spiritual person has an experientially based belief that there is a transcendent dimension to life. The actual content of this belief may range from the traditional view of a personal God to a psychological view that the "transcendent dimension" is simply a natural extension of the conscious self into the regions of the unconscious or Greater Self.

2. *Meaning and purpose in life.* The spiritual person has known the quest for meaning and purpose and has emerged from this quest with confidence that life is deeply meaningful and that one's own existence has purpose.

3. *Mission in life.* The spiritual person has a sense of "vocation". He or she feels a sense of responsibility to life, a calling to answer, a mission to accomplish, or in some cases, even a destiny to fulfil.

4. *Sacredness of life.* The spiritual person believes life is infused with sacredness and often experiences a sense of awe, reverence, and wonder even in "nonreligious" settings.

5. *Material values.* The spiritual person can appreciate material goods such as money and possessions but does not seek ultimate satisfaction from them nor attempt to use them as a substitute for frustrated spiritual needs.

6. *Altruism.* The spiritual person believes we are our "brother's keepers" and is touched by the pain and suffering of others.

7. *Idealism.* The spiritual person is a visionary committed to the betterment of the world.

8. *Awareness of the tragic.* The spiritual person is solemnly conscious of the tragic realities of human existence. He or she is deeply aware of human pain, suffering and death. And,

9. *Fruits of spirituality.* The spiritual person is one whose spirituality has borne fruit in his or her life. True spirituality has a discernible effect upon one's relationship to self, others, nature, life, and whatever one considers to be the Ultimate.

Although this definition is useful in developing an understanding of spirituality, it clearly illustrates the numinous character of the phenomenon. Clive Beck (1986), in his article "Education for Spirituality" indicates that a spiritual person "has characteristics which range from deep self-knowledge and sensitivity to awareness of and care for the concrete needs of self and others" (p. 151). He goes on to describe 13 different characteristics of a spiritual person including: awareness, breadth of outlook, a holistic outlook, integration, wonder, gratitude, hope, courage, energy, detachment, acceptance, love and gentleness. Beck himself indicates that anyone faced with such a long list of characteristics of a spiritual person might wonder if the concept of spirituality is too broad to be of any use. He believes that in fact, "failure in the spiritual domain occurs when too many of the wide range of conditions and elements of spirituality are absent" (p. 153). As Leona English (2000) contemplates the notion, she concludes:

> A fully integrated spiritual person reaches beyond his or her self and acknowledges the interdependence of all creation, appreciates the uniqueness of others, and ultimately assumes responsibility for caring and being concerned about other humans and the natural order. (p. 30)

Attempts at identifying common elements that might define spirituality in absolute terms have been unsuccessful except for the recognition that the literature consistently includes the concept of transcendence and a theme that people yearn for transcendence.

Spirituality and Adult Education

David Purpel (1989), in his comments about the role of the educator indicates, "we educators have for the most part been able (willing) to separate our concern for education from our discussion of our most serious and profound matters. What is the meaning of life? How do we relate as a family, nation, people?"(p.5). Although somewhat ominous, the questions challenge us to place adult education in a broader perspective and question our role within the academy.

What is Adult Education? UNESCO defines adult education as:

> The entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behavior in the twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development....(In Selman & Dampier, 1991, p.3)

What does this definition say to us? Although it seems all-inclusive, the definition takes on a vocational focus highlighting issues such as technical and professional qualifications; while it does mention personal development, this aspect is related to participation in social, economic and cultural development.

In contrast, Purpel and many others take a more "holistic" approach to adult education. In his article "Pragmatism: The Aims of Education and the Meaning of Life", Alven Neiman (1995) indicates that "...true liberal education is...that which allows things to grow most naturally, to become what they are by nature meant to be, to achieve their ultimate purpose" (In Kohli, 1995, p. 58). If this is true, then one's spiritual dimension cannot be denied and must be nurtured in educational curricula. Often, in both my personal life and the academic readings I have done, these questions of "meaning" and "purpose" come to the foreground. In adult education, they are most clearly illustrated through the concept of transformational learning.

Transformational learning, as defined by Patricia Cranton (1992), is " a process of critical self-reflection, or a process of questioning the assumptions and values that form the basis for the way we see the world" (p. 146). The process may be precipitated by a life crisis (death), a change of circumstances (new job), or through challenging interactions with another person (an adult educator). Mezirow (1992), in his writings on transformative learning delineates that it "is the process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one's experience. Learning includes acting on these insights" (In Cranton, p 151). Cranton goes on to define the adult educator's role in assisting with transformative learning. Some of the general steps she incorporates are:

- recognizing the learner's assumptions that are acting as constraints;
- creating an environment which challenges assumptions;
- encouraging the learner to question the validity of assumptions;
- providing guidance and support in the revision of assumptions;
- creating an environment in which the learner can act on revised assumptions;

Transformative learning seems appealing in that it has the ability to combine ideals from such diverse fields as psychology, philosophy, critical theory and adult education. It allows the learner and educator to take the best of each and as Paulo Freire or Jack Mezirow might say, move forward into "praxis". As educators though, one issue that can arise in transformational learning is the individual focus that it seems to promote. If we agree that adult education has at its roots some form of social action, then how does transformation fit into social action? Mezirow suggests that individual transformation precedes societal transformation. Critics such as Susan Collard and Michael Law (1989) have challenged Mezirow on this and indicate that Mezirow's work lacks a "coherent, comprehensive theory of social change" and that Mezirow's "emphasis on the individual cannot easily be reconciled with a theory of social change" (p. 103). I would suggest that by expanding on transformative learning through the concept of spirituality, social transformation is much more likely. Virginia Griffin (1993) defines spirituality as "...an awareness and awe of the connectedness of what is and what could be. It includes your vision of what could be for yourself--your purpose in life, for others, for nature" (p.121).

Within this context, Griffin hopes that education can move from the realm of looking only at the areas of technology and credentialization to a more holistic education. She stresses that there is an inter-relatedness between traditional education and holistic learning. She tends to avoid using terms that denote "religious thought", therefore avoiding some of the qualities that might be attached to religion such as intolerance. To bring more clarity to her argument, she goes on to quote from Molly Brown:

> Spiritual experiences are those which give us new expansive perceptions about our relationship to the cosmos, which allow us to glimpse a reality beyond the logical, rational, physically bound world we usually consider to be our home. These new perceptions are naturally accompanied by strong emotions of fear, joy...our thinking may become confused.... When we undergo such experiences, our values change. We become more open to "transpersonal" values: ethical, aesthetic, heroic, humanitarian, altruistic...(In Griffen, p.122)

When I first read these ideas, I was somewhat overwhelmed by the enormity of the ideas she was proposing. To promote transformation and spirituality in education seemed inconsistent with the traditional principles of adult education and seemed to "psychologize" the field. I also questioned whether educators could avoid getting into moral arguments or religious debates. How could you avoid the trap of confusing indoctrination with education? We have all struggled, in classroom discussions, with not imposing our values and belief systems on others, choosing words that are "politically correct" in an effort to avoid imposing our views on a classmate or student. Unfortunately, I think it is misleading to think that any subject can be taught with absolute objectivity. As I considered the impact of designing educational curriculum within a framework of spiritual transformation, I was excited by the possibilities. So often in educational settings, we hear students talk about how "useless" course material is and how they do not understand how the material relates to their programs, careers or lives.

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1953), an early writer on education indicates that:

> Though there is a higher and wider significance to life, of what value is our education if we never discover it? We may be highly educated, but if we are without deep integration of thought and feeling, our lives are incomplete, contradictory and torn with many fears; and as long as education does not cultivate an integrated outlook to life, it has very little significance.

He then goes on to indicate:

> Education is not merely a matter of training the mind. Training makes for efficiency, but it does not bring about completeness. A mind that has merely been trained is the continuation of the past, and such a mind can never discover the new. That is why, to find out what is right education, we will have to inquire into the whole significance of living. (pp. 11-13)

Krishnamurti seems to suggest that rather than worrying so much about indoctrination and forcing values on each other, that we need to focus more on discovering what this "integrated outlook to life" might mean through critical thinking and dialogue with each other.

What does this mean for the role of the adult educator? Krishnamurti (1953) indicates that "the present system of education is making us subservient, mechanical and deeply thoughtless; though it awakens us intellectually, inwardly it leaves us incomplete, stultified and uncreative" (p. 15). Although Krishnamurti was describing concerns he thought were more prevalent in the pedagogy of children and youth, he also directs these comments to the educational system in general. Even today, when we look at adult education in workplaces or communities, the focus is most often that of skill development and vocational training.

If we turn once again to David Purpel's (1989) view of education, he comments that the purpose of adult education:

> ...is to help us to see, hear, and experience the world more clearly, more completely, and with more understanding. Education can provide us with the critical tools...that enable us to understand. Another vital aspect of the educational process is the development of creativity and imagination, which enable us not only to understand but to build, make, create, and re-create our world...We are here talking about a vision that can illuminate what we are doing and what we might work to achieve. Such a vision needs to inform all aspects of our life, and naturally that includes education.... (p. 5)

As adult educators then, we need to take up the challenge of integrating not only academic theory and skill development but also encourage students to look at their own transformational learnings. By encouraging dialogue and critical thinking, we establish a process that challenges students in all realms of social, political and moral issues. If we return to some of the steps outlined by Cranton, she suggests that we recognize the learner's assumptions that act as constraints, create an environment that challenges these assumptions, encourage questioning of assumptions, provide guidance and support in this process, and create an environment in which the learner can act. I believe that these steps become increasingly important when we add spirituality to the concept of transformational learning. The only addition I would make is to recognize that very often it will be the educator who is being challenged to critically think about his or her assumptions. Purpel (1995) summarizes this idea well when he indicates:

> Each of us engages in some form or another in the troubling and daunting task of searching for and acting on meaning and I believe that those of us who are educators ought to integrate this quest into our professional responsibilities. My view is that educators need to share that struggle and infuse personal reflection into the intellectual and ideological dimensions of their work not only as legitimate self-reflection but also as a necessary part of genuine dialogue. (In Kohli, p.156)

In trying to reconcile the concepts of spirituality and adult education, the relationship always seems to return to concepts of meaning and purpose. Peter Jarvis (1993), in his book Adult Education and Theological Interpretations, considers the concept of transformation and adult education with the help of Laurent Daloz. He indicates that:

> The self in transformation is Laurent Daloz's image of the self in adult

> education. Daloz (1986) described education as a transformational journey in which the driving motive for learning is the search for meaning. Working with adult students studying various curricula in a nontraditional college degree program, Daloz saw their experience as a sense-making, meaning-generating search that was far more encompassing than the study of the subject matter. In the study of subject matter they confronted themselves. Learning entailed development and growth in which occurs a transformation in how they created meaning. Persons experienced growth when they began to look at life through their own eyes and not the eyes of others. (p. 135)

Implications for Research

Having considered some of the theoretical and practical implications of including spirituality in adult education within the context of the literature, we begin to see more clearly some answers to the research question: **"What is the meaning of spirituality to adult learners and educators?"** The last chapter of this thesis will consider this question through the shared lens of the research participants and the literature. The heuristic model provides an opportunity to dwell on the concepts that have been raised more fully. Clark Moustakas (1990) describes this process, indicating:

> From the beginning and throughout an investigation, heuristic research involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration. When I consider an issue, problem, or question, I enter into it fully. I focus on it with unwavering attention and interest. I search introspectively, meditatively, and reflectively into its nature and meaning. My primary task is to recognize whatever exists in my consciousness as a fundamental awareness, to receive and accept it, and then to dwell on its nature and possible meanings. With full and unqualified interest, I am determined to extend my understanding and knowledge of an experience. I begin the heuristic investigation with my own self-awareness and explicate that awareness with reference to a question or problem until an essential insight is achieved, one that will throw a beginning light onto a critical human experience. (p. 11)

Chapter VI: The Mutual Creation of Meaning
Discussion of Results

> I don't know exactly where you are on your journey. But I suspect that your journey, like mine, is towards trying to come into a deeper understanding of what it means to live divided no more. If we can come to a deeper understanding of what this decision might mean for us in the context of education, we will have done something well worth doing.
>
> (Parker J. Palmer, 1999, p. 32)

Introduction

This final chapter will attempt to consolidate my research and literature review. My hope is that the resulting discussion will provide greater clarity surrounding the research question: **"What is the meaning of spirituality to adult learners and educators?"** I recognize that combining such a diversity of perspectives may ultimately create the opposite effect, serving only to complicate the discussion. In order to be true to the research question, I will return to the beginning chapter and the questions I posed for this research. This final chapter will attempt to answer those questions from the perspective of both the participants and the literature. To reiterate, the first chapter posed the following questions:

1. What meanings do different individuals give to "spirituality"?
2. How do individuals understand "spirit" and "soul"?
3. Does a relationship exist between spirituality and a person's search for meaning and purpose?
4. How do people "cultivate" or develop their spirituality?

5. What relationship exists between spiritual development and education?

Each of these questions will be developed as a section within this chapter. The final section of the chapter will highlight recommendations for practice and consider areas for further research. Prior to moving into the chapter, I would ask you, the reader, to suspend judgement and consider the meanings as they apply to you. It seems prudent to reflect on this comment by Parker J. Palmer (1983):

> We may bring truth to light by finding it and speaking its name—but truth also brings us to life by finding and naming us. As we allow ourselves to be known by that which we know, our capacity for knowledge grows broader and deeper. The knower who advances most rapidly toward the heart of truth is one who not only asks "What is out there." in each encounter with the world, but one who also asks "What does this encounter reveal about me." Only as we allow ourselves to be known—and thus cleansed of the prejudices and self-interests that distort the community of truth—can we begin truly to know. When we allow ourselves to be known in truth, we are able to see and hear and feel more of the world's reality than we could before we were known. (Pg. 60)

What meanings do different individuals give to "spirituality"?

Defining spirituality was a difficult task for all of the research participants; this is congruent with the literature in that researchers, theologians and philosophers also struggle with this endeavour. Although the definition of spirituality often became entangled with other concepts, some themes did emerge through the research interviews. When participants were asked to define spirituality, often the negative associations surrounding organized religion were linked to spirituality. Participants felt that it was important that spirituality be distinguished from these negative perceptions. Other concepts that emerged were the connection between spirituality and themes of meaning and purpose, service to humanity and the connection to a higher power.

The relationship that spirituality has to organized religion was a theme or question that participants frequently pondered. Only one of the participants (Gail) was actively engaged in any form of organized religious practice at the time of the research; both Kate and Don described themselves as being engaged in non-organized spiritual practices. Michelle was not involved in any formal religious or spiritual practice at the time of the research. When contemplating the link between spirituality and organized religion, Michelle commented:

> …spirituality has taken on a new meaning in the last few years, a new non-religious meaning…it functions as a word that separates ideas that ordinarily were connected with organized religion to mean non-organized religion, which it hasn't always meant. I think that's a fairly new phenomenon.

Donald also picked up on this theme, recognizing that there was a tendency to "interweave the terminology". For Donald, the distinction between religion and spirituality was the "organization". Donald wanted me to understand that his spirituality was not organized but rather, his spirituality encompassed his whole life. Donald described spirituality as a lifestyle involving spiritual practice, values, respect, love, and individual determinism. Donald thought it important to state that he didn't need people around him to validate his spirituality—his validation came from within.

In her article, "Toward a spiritual pedagogy: meaning, practice, and applications in management education", Karen Harlos (2000) identified the need to establish "conceptual clarity" between the concepts of spirituality and religion. Harlos indicates that both spirituality and religion express the existence of God or some higher power in the lives of human beings. Harlos differentiates the concepts in that religion through its historical roots is connected with creeds and doctrine, whereas spirituality is the praxis of faith. Harlos summarizes her findings on the topic indicating that:

> Spirituality is both more inclusive and indistinct than religion. Whereas religion entails institutionalized social beliefs and practices, spirituality connotes daily personal applications of values.... Spirituality as a "lived experience" emerges as a fundamental element often expressed as a determination to live one's ideals. (p. 616)

As has often been pointed to in the literature, the confusion created by enmeshing the concepts of spirituality and religion may account for academics avoiding "spiritual" research and, for some educators, may justify excluding discussions of spirituality in the classroom. Although this research did not attempt to delve into the "religious" aspects of spirituality, the literature does verify that the concepts are linked. We will spend time discussing this topic again later in this chapter. Steven Glazer (1999) highlights the issue as he describes the resurgence of spirituality and fundamentalism. He comments:

> There is a renaissance of interest in paths of the heart and spirit, and this resurgence of spiritual values crosses racial, ethnic, political, cultural, and class lines. At the same time, there is a strong resurgence in fundamentalism, sectarianism, and religious politicking. To a great extent, both of these "movements" result from (or are an outgrowth of) the same single, pervasive dis-ease: the experience of the loss of meaning in our culture.
>
> The spirituality movement in general can be seen as one approach towards dealing with anxiety or meaninglessness. Fundamentalism, too,

> can be a strategy for coping with dis-ease. Regardless, at a basic personal level, the loss of meaning can be touched, felt. Often it is experienced as anxiety, fear or distrust: in oneself; in one's experience; in others; and especially in the coming unknown. Unfortunately, this feeling—a feeling of disconnection—is born in our schools: in the way we are taught to perceive, understand, and interact with the world. (p. 3)

The research participants concluded that the connection between spirituality and religion was sometimes problematic due to the negative connotations ascribed to both, and consequentially, the hesitancy of some academics and the public at large to consider spiritual questions within education.

The desire to find meaning and purpose in one's life, and the relevance to spirituality was another recurring theme for both the research participants and within the literature. In her book The Soul of Education , Rachael Kessler (2000) comments on both of these aspects, recognizing that individuals are often involved in a search for meaning and purpose that enables them to explore the "big questions" and that they also experience a yearning for deep connections. Kessler described this yearning as a "quality of relationship that is profoundly caring, is resonant with meaning, and involves feelings of belonging, or of being truly seen and known" (p. 17). We will build on these concepts later in the chapter when we address the connection between spirituality and meaning and purpose.

When Gail defines spirituality, she builds on the concept of "meaning making" and addresses spirituality from the vantage point that spirituality allows her to broaden her perspectives and become more accommodating. She indicates,

> …spirituality for me is the angle from which I look at things… it's the angle from which you look at life…our perceptions of events and happenings around us…and how we allow these perceptions to affect us or to disaffect us. Spirituality for me is: I penetrate the physical boundaries, I go beyond that, I look for deeper meanings and the perceptions of those deeper meanings make us more flexible, accommodating and more approachable.

Steven Glazer (1999) speaks to this expansion of awareness through spiritual work, indicating that:

> Sacredness is not understood within a particular religious framework but instead as growing out of two basic quantities of our experience: awareness and wholeness. Awareness is a natural, self-manifesting quality: it is our ability to perceive, experience and know. A sense of awareness can be cultivated (or enhanced) through mindfulness or attentiveness. The development of awareness enables us to bring a greater and greater sense of presence to the repercussions and meaning of our lives.
> Wholeness is the inherent, seamless, interdependent quality of the world. Wholeness, indeed, is the fact of the matter: the things of the world (including us) are already connected, are already in relationship, are already in union. Wholeness, however, can be cultivated within us by experiencing this nondual quality of the world. Through experiences of awareness and wholeness, we begin to establish the view of the sacred. (p. 10)

Leona M. English (2000) also comments on the spiritual connection to finding meaning, indicating that:

> The search for meaning is bound up in the understanding of everyday life. It involves a realization that life is greater than our sphere of influence and that our future is bound up with that of others. The opportunity to find relevance and meaning, to be part of something beyond ourselves, is profoundly spiritual. (p. 30)

Although Kate interlaces spirit and soul into her definition of spirituality, her expansion of the concept is useful in that it develops spirituality by speaking to this notion of interconnectedness and the aspect of service to others. She explains:

> I see spirituality as having to do with a couple of different aspects. #1, I see it having to do with how we are all interconnected—not just man and woman, but all creatures, all life forms. How those connections are in the world and that interconnectedness that we all share through an aspect of ourselves that isn't immediately evident. To me that would be our spirits—that we each have a soul and a spirit and I also see it as having to do with our actions and our thoughts…. Spirituality…is not only embracing the divine but there is a service element to it for me and living your life with love and compassion… that's how I define it.

Gang, Meyerhof and Maver (1992) speak to this concept indicating that "spirituality manifests as we experience our connectedness. This deep connection to creation evolves over our entire life" (p. 6). In speaking to her own work as a spiritual educator, Rachael Kessler (2000) indicates that "as students tell their stories about when their spirit was nourished, many are infused with this quality of deep connection" (p. 18). Kessler speaks to connection in its broadest sense--referring to connection in terms of a connection to self, connection to another, connection to community, connection to lineage, connection to nature or a connection to a higher power. When we move to a discussion of soul, the link between the concept of soul and connectedness is even more apparent—signifying that spirituality is manifest through the expression of both spirit and soul.

How do individuals understand spirit?

As we considered the topic of spirit, the theme that was mentioned most frequently by the research participants was the notion of transcendence. We often hear transcendent statements in our everyday lives—the corporate, government or individual need to excel, strive, lead or transcend is commonplace. These statements have often provided me with the opportunity to reflect on the transcendent nature of our species—our need to transcend ourselves. Within my own research, three of the participants spoke of experiences that took them beyond themselves (peak experiences) and the importance of these experiences within a spiritual context. The other concept that seemed vital to understanding spirit was the concept of individuation and how self-development related to transcending self.

Kate, Gail and Michelle all spoke of experiences that took them beyond themselves. Michelle spoke of the peak experience of dancing and connected this feeling to spirit. Both Gail and Kate spoke of music and again, commented on how these experiences allowed them to transcend themselves. All three women tried to describe the character and essence of their experience in order to give form to the notion of transcendence. Michelle was most descriptive of the experience, indicating:

> They're called peak experiences, and I think whether they're religious—and they can be—they're spiritual experiences, whether they're in the arts, or religion, or whatever. I know they've been rare in my life, but impressive because you don't ever forget the quality of that experience. I think maybe it only happened a half a dozen times when I was dancing but, everything was just right, balance was perfect and you become one with the music. Your senses aren't really operational…and your body's going off, doing whatever it's supposed to do, while you are somewhere else, you're having a peak experience.

Both Gail and Kate described similar feelings, Gail spoke of feelings that would "overcome" her, Kate described her experience as a "moment of clarity" where she realized that she was "inextricably connected" to every person and that she experienced a "feeling of goodwill and love for every stranger in that room."

Wendy Kohli (1995), views these different modes of expression as "rich languages of expression" that allow us to communicate with "significant others". Kohli reinforces the notion of connectedness indicating that language, whatever the type is not monological, but rather dialogical in nature. She indicates:

> We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression. For my purposes here, I want to take language in a broad sense, covering not only the words we speak, but also other modes of expression whereby we define ourselves, including the "languages" of art, of gesture, of love, and the like. But we learn these modes of expression through exchanges with others. People do not acquire the languages needed for self-definition on their own. Rather, we are introduced to them through interaction with others who matter to us--what George Herbert Mead called "significant others". The genesis of the human mind is in this sense not monological, not something each person accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical. (p. 163)

In his research, Mezirow speaks of experiences he describes as "disorienting dilemmas" and points to the fact that they can be the impetus for transformative learning. Mezirow categorizes these experiences as externally focused and that they challenge previously accepted presuppositions. Mezirow (1991) indicates:

> Perspective transformation can occur either through an accretion of transformed meaning schemes resulting from a series of dilemmas or in response to an externally imposed epochal dilemma such as a death….A disorienting dilemma that begins the process of transformation also can result from an eye-opening discussion, book, poem, or painting…(p. 168)

I would add to these dilemmas, the peak experiences that the research participants speak of. Although internally focused, these experiences do challenge the individual in relation to their sense of self and their connection to a “higher power”. Gang, Meyerhof and Maver (1992) also comment on these special moments, indicating:

> Spirituality manifests as we experience our connectedness…It may be experienced as special moments when one is alone in the forest, or when one stares into the heavens on a star-filled night, or observes cloud formations. It is an experience of awe and wonder and an awareness of the oneness of all. Spirituality is the recognition of the inherent beauty, truth and goodness in life. It calls forth such traits as compassion, joy and humility. (p. 7)

Kate connected these experiences to the concept of transcendence. She described transcendence in terms of the spirit being “completely pure” and “completely free”. This freedom Kate ascribed to spirit allows for transcendence into “our purest form.”

As Karen Harlos (2000) speaks to transcendence, she captures the experiences of all three participants, indicating that:

> Transcendence…refers to 'that flight of the human spirit outside the confines of its material, physical existence, which all of us, secular or religious, experience on at least a few occasions' (Rushdie, 1990, as cited by Suhor, 1998, pp. 13-14).

Harlos goes on to describe the experience in terms familiar to that of the research participants. She indicates that peak experiences are an example of transcendent experiences and are demonstrated when:

> …joy, detachment, focus, and creativity collide in a rapturous moment allowing us to perform to our full potential. These, in turn, are inextricably linked to values and become 'conversion experiences,' motivating us to repeat or recapture the intense pleasure associated with original peak episodes. (p. 616)

Noting the potential for these experiences to be internally focused, Kate commented on the individual aspects of spirit that can sometimes separate us from a spirituality that is grounded and connected. As she pondered spirit, she indicated:

> You can only go to a certain level with your spirituality if it is only inward looking. I really believe that then you would never be able to transcend. I mean, if someone is alone in a room, completely doing their own spiritual work, but a mean bugger to anyone around them, does that mean that they're still spiritual but they don't have soul? Any kind of self serving search for spirituality is just that, it's self serving and I don't think that in my definition then, that isn't spiritual.

Jung (1969) speaks to the notion of connectedness and spirit, describing the separation of spirit and soul as a false spirit. For Jung, spirit gives meaning to life and life gives expression to spirit. His description of spirit attributes to it qualities of a guiding force. He indicates:

> Life is a touchstone for the truth of the spirit. Spirit that drags a man away from life, seeking fulfilment only in itself, is a false spirit--though the man too is to blame, since he can choose whether he will give himself up to this spirit or not. Life and spirit are two powers or necessities between which man is placed. Spirit gives meaning to his life, and the possibility of its greatest development. But life is essential to spirit, since its truth is nothing if it cannot live. (p. 337)

Although, as was mentioned in chapter five, Thomas Moore (1996) clearly differentiates spirit and soul by referring to spirit as being "focused on transcending the limits of our personal, time-bound, concrete life" and soul as being "embedded in the details of ordinary, everyday experience" (p. 12) the split between the two concepts is somewhat artificial. John Dirkx (1995) brings the contradictory aspects of spirit and soul together when he comments:

> Spirit is, in some respects, the flip-side of soul and contributes to the health of the soul. It refers to that which is 'transcendent and all-embracing' (Bolman and Deal, 1995, p. 9)…Spirit is represented in such things as an articulated world view, value frameworks that are thoughtfully arrived at, family traditions and values, and a sense of connectedness to the whole (Moore, 1992)…The soul needs a kind of spirituality that is not at odds with the everydayness of our lives. (p. 3)

The research participants spoke about the transcendent nature of spirit, recognizing the potential for this split between spirit, as more rational, and soul, as more grounded in the body. All of the research participants commented on the importance of an all-embracing, holistic, connected spirituality.

How do individuals understand soul?

Differentiating the concept of spirit from the concept of soul was a difficult task for the research participants. As Donald tried to distinguish the two concepts he commented:

> Soul is again equated with—I guess, it's my spirit, right? My spirit is my spirituality and my spirituality is my spirit.

Michelle also had difficulty defining soul and indicated that soul's connection to religion often created problems for people. As she contemplated soul she indicated:

> I think soul still carries a very religious connotation. It's not in the secular vocabulary in the same way as spirituality.

Kate echoed some of these sentiments, indicating:

> I think because of previous experiences with religion I sort of see soul in more of a moralistic framework. I see saving one's soul and it all comes back to that punitive aspect I find in religion. I rarely use that word soul to be honest; I always use spirit. I guess in some ways I must be just thinking of them in the same way—that it's that essence of us that makes us unique and it is the one thing in us that should be, or can be the purest and it is that which lives on.

Although the participants struggled with the concept, there were key elements that differentiated soul from spirit. The overriding theme was that of connectedness—whether that be to a higher power, to a universal consciousness, to humanity, or to family and loved ones. John Dirkx (1995) captures this well as he builds on the work of Thomas Moore. Dirkx indicates:

> While soul is impossible to define precisely, a number of characteristics provide some basis for understanding what it means. It has to do with 'genuineness and depth…life in all its particulars…[It] is revealed in attachment, love, and community (Moore, 1982, pp. xi-xii)…(p. 3)

This connection to something beyond themselves was apparent for all of the research participants. For Michelle, the connection was to the Jungian concept of a universal consciousness. As an academic, Michelle had not fully characterized soul, but she did put faith in Jung's definition. Michelle highlighted Jung's concept of soul as a "connecting function conveying meaning that is deeper and more comprehensive." The other aspect of the definition she found important was that the "soul image gives a sense of meaningful connection beyond oneself, or at least the possibility of such connection." Michelle was intrigued by this definition and thought that the reference to a connecting function was important. Although Michelle was inclined to focus on the rational, she recognized that there was something more than the rational when it came to discussions of spirit and soul. Jung (1954) also warned about the "arbitrary" definition of spirit as "mere matter of thinking and intuition" in that man might be tempted to assume that "philosophical knowledge is the highest good" (p. 276) and forget any meaningful connection beyond oneself.

When Gail spoke about soul, her bond to family was ever present in her conversation. As she described soul, she commented:

> My religion tells me I do have a soul, which stays behind when I leave. I guess that's a way of my family having some comfort that I'm still with them while I'm not really physically with them. My soul is where I start out as a baby, when I become aware of my existence, when I can interpret things and respond to the way I interpret them. It embodies everything that I am—and that to me is as far as I will go if pushed for a definition.

Gail's move to Canada and the separation she felt from family and loved ones intensified her need to connect with others. Gail often referred to the importance of this connection within her educational experiences and in her social contacts with comments such as "the connection I make, it comes from my soul" or when she spoke about intense experiences that were soulful and the connections these feelings created.

Although Donald did not speak specifically about soul, he emphasized his commitment to bible study and the connection this had to family. The fact that he had inherited his grandmother's bible provided a meaningful link between his study of the bible and his connection to his roots. Donald described the bible in terms of a sanctuary, a safe place, and a place to store sacred things. Within his description, one sensed how important this family heirloom was to him:

> It's also out of respect to my grandmother, because it was hers and she had given it to me—there's a poem in the back, so it's also being connected to her. It pulls me toward the bible. There are certain things I keep in my bible, wedding invitations…things that are very precious to me. It's a safe

place. I respect it and read it. However, it doesn't run my life.

During their interviews, each participant spoke about the importance of connection—to family, to faith, to a supportive learning environment, to relationships. These connections were represented in their stories, in their spiritual practice and in their experience of wholeness, meaning and purpose. As mentioned earlier, Rachael Kessler (2000) stresses the importance of "deep connection" in her book The Soul of Education. Kessler describes six deep connections that are important to understanding soul:

1. connection to the self: the capacity to be in relationship to one's inner life;
2. connection to another person: the capacity to engage in authentic intimacy;
3. connection to an authentic community: the yearning to connect meaningfully with a group or community;
4. connection to lineage: for some, an encounter or reconnection with family history or ancestry can begin to nourish their spirit;
5. connection to nature: for some people a deep connection with the natural world can be a great source of comfort and joy; and finally,
6. connection to a higher power: for some, religious faith and a belief in a higher source of power and meaning in the universe is most nourishing to their spirit. (pp. 18-35)

These six categories capture the essence of deep connection for the four participants in my research. As we sift through each participant's life story, we can identify their connections and how these connections impact their sense of soul. Linda Vogel (2000) gives substance to the individual interpretation of our experience indicating:

> No matter what family and faith tradition we grew up in (mine was Christian, United Methodist), there are stories and dreams, hopes and fears, gifts and wounds that make us who we are. This is true whether we grew up in a church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or shrine and still claim it as home, or if we reject past family or religious experience as no longer home. Some of us may never have participated in a religious community or tradition. The metaphors, stories, songs, and rituals that adult educators (and learners, too) carry inform how they understand gift and obligation, gratitude and service, hope and fear, trust and shame, love and punishment. (p. 18)

The participants' stories have shaped their understanding of connection and how it relates to spirituality and soul. Rachel Naomi Remen (1999) summarizes this link, indicating "it is only through connection that we can recover true compassion, or any authentic sense of meaning in life: a sense of the mysterious, the profound, the sacred nature of the world" (p. 34).

Does a relationship exist between spirituality and a person's search for meaning and purpose?

As each participant spoke of their spiritual journey, a search for meaning and purpose was typically an underlying theme. Kate contemplates this notion indicating:

> I would suspect that a lot of people go back to school or go to university or choose a new occupation because they are looking for meaning or purpose. Because at a certain point, even if you have everything, you find that there can still be a gnawing emptiness inside of you. And that emptiness I believe can only be filled by spirituality and by a sense of meaning.

Meaning and purpose were the foundation of Kate's spiritual journey and the spiritual nature of her journey provided her with direction.

Michelle's connection with meaning and purpose on the other hand was more intellectual. As she tried to explain her own near death experience and the impact this had on her life, she identified her need to understand the experience from both a "rational" and "non-rational" perspective. She explains this:

> I had an illness that was deep and long and provided me with a rather unique experience that was very bizarre and I came out of that saying what on earth happened?…And so that started a search for meaning. What happened and what did it mean? How does this affect the concept I had of life, death, and our purpose in the universe…all of the big questions?

Remen (1999) contemplates the connection between Mezirow's concept of a "disorienting dilemma" and the journey to attach meaning to these kinds of experiences. Her comments describe aspects of Michelle's journey:

> In times of crisis, meaning can be a source of strength: meaning enables us to endure and prevail through difficult times. Meaning heals us not by numbing our pain or distracting us from our problems but by reminding us of our integrity: of who we are, of what we are doing, and how we belong. Meaning gives us a place to stand: a place from which to meet the events of our lives; a way to experience life's true value and its mystery. Most of us live far more meaningful lives than we realize. (p. 47)

Gail also exemplifies some of Remen's points. Gail's search for meaning and purpose was both a personal one and one she now felt needed to be extended to her homeland. Because of the struggles she endured during the apartheid regime, Gail was determined to communicate her understanding of transcendence to others in order to give her own life meaning and to provide some sense of meaning and purpose to those she might come in contact with. She asserts this, indicating:

> The ultimate aim for me, because my life was so empty in essence, apart from the work I had to do, that the meaning I find in what I do now, I want to transfer that. I want to become intoxicated. People must see their worlds differently because they've been in contact with me. That sounds so arrogant but that's my aim. People must find meaning in their lives now. Much of that meaning was taken away because of limitations of many things in the country…I want it to be different for them now. They need to see that their place on earth is a meaningful place and not just to grow up and go through the motions.

When David Pratt (1994) develops the concept of meaning and purpose as it relates to spirituality, he addresses Kate's critique on spiritual estrangement and speaks to Gail and Michelle's desire to find a place in the universe that provides meaning in their lives. He indicates:

> Most subjective of all, and most difficult to render into the verbal formulas of beloved Western thought, are spiritual meanings: the ways in which individuals conceive of their place in the universe and interpret the fundamental meaning of their lives. In the absence of spiritual meaning, writes Webster, we suffer "spiritual estrangement, defined as feeling apart from or broken and distant from both one's own deeper spiritual self and from any greater spiritual entity" (1984, p.16). Spirituality weaves those strands of human consciousness that provide a sense of personal meaning, significance, harmony, or wonder. Perhaps because of a confusion in the minds of educators between spirituality and religion, such meanings are rarely addressed in school curricula. (p. 8)

Donald raises the issue of spiritual estrangement within the education system on a number of different occasions, especially in his poem. As he reflected on his own spirituality, Donald was aware of what David Pratt defines as his "spiritual self" but struggled to define or express Pratt's concept of a "greater spiritual entity". In the end, Leona English's (2000) comments best capture the participants understanding of the search for meaning and purpose as they all suggested that: "the opportunity to find relevance and meaning, to be part of something beyond ourselves, is profoundly spiritual. (p. 30).

How do people "cultivate" or develop their spirituality?

Each research participant's life circumstances proved to be an important factor influencing the development of their spirituality—each person's path was distinct, their spiritual practices divergent. Kate associated her journey with a life of service and connection; Michelle's path was one of rationality; Gail spoke of self-actualization as a predominate factor; and finally, Donald's journey united divergent endeavours to create a unified spiritual practice.

As Kate reflected on her spiritual development, she commented on a number of factors that she felt were important to cultivating a spiritual dimension in her life. Of primary importance to her were elements such as service to humanity and her connection to mankind. She explained this, indicating:

> We are here on this earth to learn, to serve and hopefully that those experiences help us to help others. Spirituality…is not only embracing the divine but there is a service element to it for me, and living your life with love and compassion….

In describing the cultivation of spirituality, Kate recognized that the development of a person's spiritual side is individual and cannot be forced. She related this to her own experience, indicating:

> There are times when you're ready and there are other times when I'm not ready and haven't been ready—I would not have received it. And other times when I've wanted to be more spiritual and it's just not there—I was just not ready.

Kate felt the individual nature of spiritual development was important to note and described the journey as an "individual" and "personal" search with different paths and different answers for every person and that no one teacher could answer all questions. Although recognizing the individual nature of spiritual journeys, Kate returned to an over-riding theme of service as she concluded her thoughts on spiritual development. She related this to her own personal struggles, indicating:

> There have been times when I feel like I've been self-absorbed in my own search—that I'm missing the whole point. If I don't use that search and the meaning and the answers that I find to benefit others with love and compassion then I still don't consider that to be the essence of what spirituality is.

Michelle's comments about spiritual development were limited. As she contemplated her own journey, she claimed that she didn't "have a sense of mission" but she did recognize that the "path" she took was the important quality of her journey. In describing her efforts to understand her near death experience, Michelle commented that "it's a very spiritual journey. It's going on in my head and inner soul's mind. A part of me that I've never really spent much time exploring." Michelle recognized that for her, any search to find meaning and purpose had to satisfy both her rational mind and her spiritual leanings. Accommodating the rational requisites proved easier for Michelle than accommodating her spiritual side. She clearly admitted that she had spent most of her childhood and adult life in school and so "of course it would come to mind that that's a good place to search for answers." In Embracing Freedom: Spirituality and Liberation, bell hook (1999) speaks to this concept from her personal experience, indicating that:

> As a student in graduate school, seeking spirituality in education, I wanted there to be a place in my life for theory and politics, as well as spiritual practice. My quest was to find for them a meeting place. (p. 117)

Ultimately, Michelle recognized that in order for the explanation to truly have meaning for her, it had to make sense from both a rational and a spiritual perspective.

Gail's spiritual path initially focussed on "self-actualization", a process that enabled her to "define" herself differently. As she spoke of her spiritual development, Gail recognized that her journey was quite individualistic. She describes this, saying:

> To me it's like a continuous journey. It's like becoming self-actualized.... To me, it's like you never quite get there. But it doesn't mean that you're worse off or your environment is negative. On the contrary, because it's a continuous journey, the journey becomes lighter; the journey becomes more optimistic, more positive as you go along…it's a continuous thing for me. You never really arrive.

Having reached a more "self-actualized" state, Gail moved her spiritual direction to one that was more service oriented. Gail reflected on her desire to return to her homeland and teach. She hoped her teaching would now be characterized by her efforts to help students develop and actualize in a way that Gail did not experience when she was growing up in South Africa. As has been mentioned before, Gail desire was to now "help kids make connections", "find meaning" and "see their worlds differently" because of their contact with her.

Linda Vogel (2000) speaks to both Gail's journey of self-actualization and her need to transfer her new found knowledge as part of her spiritual journey. Vogel explains that, "seeking a spiritual path must lead toward healing and wholeness—toward an affirmation of self, others, and the whole universe" (p. 19). In explaining this, Vogel goes on to indicate that:

> When our "self" is whole—body, mind, will and spirit—the gift we bring to our subject matter and our students is filled with potential for understanding more deeply and engaging more fully. This openness and vulnerability fosters transforming and life-giving teaching. (p. 19)

Gail's comments reflect this kind of transformation.

Donald seemed to be the most diligent of the four participants in terms of practising a spiritual regime. Interestingly enough, he also strongly opposed "organized religion" based on ritual. As he described his spiritual practice, the element that appeared most significant to him was his daily journaling:

> I will start with writing my journal this morning, it's kind of for me a healthy thing to put into words and also visualize what's going on in one's head. And I kind of look at that as my spiritual side, which tends to get neglected at times--especially when there are other things going on in my life. It's kind of taken for granted I guess because it's there, you just have to fall back on it, right?

Donald recognized a need to combine a number of spiritual practices in order to stay healthy and whole. He speaks to the combination of journaling, reflection, education and experience that allowed him to develop a more holistic view of the world.

> I find that to really be in touch with one's self, you have to work at it like anything else… So, for me it's just sitting down and reflecting and making sure that I'm in touch with what my beliefs are on the spiritual side of me

> and what I need to keep myself healthy at a number of levels—spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically.

Because of his opposition to organized religion, Donald recognized the need to somehow develop the spiritual dimension of his life through other means. In his struggle to cultivate spirituality from a non-secular standing, Donald was able to incorporate education, life experience and a combination of spiritual rituals to ensure his own spiritual growth. As a result, Donald was able to take the best of both the secular and non-secular worlds to create a spiritual practice that was meaningful for him. Patricia Cranton (1994) speaks to Mezirow's constructivist approach as a way of understanding the development of meaning in our lives. She explains that:

> Mezirow describes the constructivist assumptions that underlie his theory as including " a conviction that meaning exists within ourselves rather than in external forms such as books and that personal meanings that we attribute to our experience are acquired and validated through human interaction and communication." (p. 25)

Donald's spiritual development reflects this process and he indicates that his meaning developed through the external form of books, the validation of human interaction and communication, and the expression of spirituality that he developed from within.

What relationship exists between spiritual development and education?

Asking the participants to consider the relationship between spirituality and education may have been an unfair question. Although Gail and Michelle had both been actively involved in teaching, neither Donald nor Kate would have defined themselves as educators in the traditional sense—although both frequently assumed the role of mentor within their worksites. Even Gail and Michelle admitted that prior to their involvement in the research they had not given a significant amount of thought to the connection between the two concepts (spirituality and education). Nonetheless, all of the participants had insight into the topic either in terms of how they wished their own educational experiences had developed, or how they thought educators should handle the topic of spirituality within the academy.

Kate typified her own educational experience as one that was "bereft" of any sense of spirituality. She described a need for a more holistic framework for students. Parker Palmer (1999) gives voice to some of Kate's concerns when he indicates:

> How it would transform academic life if we could practice simple respect! I don't think there are many places where people feel less respect than they do on university campuses. The university is a place where we grant respect only to a few things—to the text, to the expert, to those who win in competition. But we do not grant respect to students, to stumbling and failing. We do not grant respect to tentative and heartfelt ways of being in the world where the person can't think of the right word to say, or can't think of any word at all. (p. 21)

As Kate attempted to describe what she felt a more holistic educational experience might be like, she reverted to a description of a self-help program she had participated in:

> I think the whole education process there was very non-judgemental …all embracing…another key was it wasn't dictatorial, it wasn't hierarchical so that way it wasn't the way that religion very often is…. There was a safety there, where I don't think we have that safety anymore in educational settings. And I think that because we're all so afraid of religion now and because there are so many different religions and we have to be politically correct, everything has to be so all embracing. But, I think that in the whole education system we're losing all of that teaching—it's just not allowed anymore. At least before there used to be something that was connecting you to higher values, to teaching those kinds of things, and we

> just don't have that anymore....

As Kate went on to suggest ways that teachers might incorporate spirituality into their classes, she struggled with the thought that instructors might then be forcing their own "religious beliefs" or spiritual notions onto their students. Kate cautioned against instructors imposing their personal views and suggested they should only be engaged in activities that encourage a student's personal search. In The Heart of Learning: Spirituality in Education, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (1999) speaks to this concern as well indicating:

> I think the best thing is to develop secular ethics. Simply make clear the essential human values: a warm heart, a sense of caring for one another. Make these things clear. These values can be taught without referring to a religious point of view. They can be taught using secular arguments. (p. 88)

Kate goes on to express concern that if we were to try and force spirituality into education, the potential outcome might be "spirituality curriculum", something she felt would be stilted and promote individual perspectives on the topic as opposed to a broader more holistic viewpoint. Rather than force spirituality into the curriculum, Kate felt it was more important that educators model spirituality through their conduct. Judith Simmer-Brown (1999) builds on Parker Palmer's comments and what has been proposed by Kate, indicating:

> As educators, one of the best things that we can do for our students is to not force them into holding theories and solid concepts but rather to actually encourage the process, the inquiry involved, and the times of not knowing—with all of the uncertainties that go along with that. This is really what supports going deep. This is openness. (p. 105)

These comments also support the framework of transformative learning proposed by Patricia Cranton (1992) that focuses on educators creating learning environments that challenge assumptions, encourage learners to question their assumptions, and provides an environment of guidance and support to the learner.

As Michelle reflected on the concept of spirituality and education, she struggled with conflicting thoughts. Michelle's own experience with education had been quite positive and when she needed to find out more about her own "near death experience", her return to university seemed almost inevitable. Michelle struggled with her own rational need to understand and research her experience and the conflicting spiritual aspects. She commented:

> For me it's got to make sense from any point of view. If it's the truth, it's going to make sense from all points of view. If I understand it, it will make sense. And until it makes sense, I don't know enough—that's my feeling.

Ron Miller (1999) speaks to this issue, commenting on the need for a balance between the rational and the spiritual:

> Certainly an excessively rational or academic education denies spontaneity and spirit. But a completely romantic or child-centered vision denies the shadow and denies the need for order and discipline. So education must address or at least respect the multifaceted mystery of human existence, or else it damages the delicate process of human development. (p. 194)

Elizabeth Tisdell (2000) also speaks to this dilemma of bringing spirituality and rationality together as she comments on her research in the area. She indicates:

> …none of the participants suspended their rationality in the process of describing their own spiritual journey. Part of what their spiritual

> development seemed to be about was having spiritual experiences and critically and rationally analyzing some of what those experiences were about while continuing to be open to new spiritual experiences…. Furthermore, integrating new insights from different paradigms and new spiritual traditions was an important part of spiritual development. (p. 331)

Michelle described the support she received from her colleagues at the university as an important component of her experience and recognized that there was no other place she would have turned to for this support—"that's all I knew". Glazer (1999) speaks to some of the needs Michelle expresses, indicating:

> Spirituality in education begins with questions: What is my experience? What is my effect? What are the interrelationships between myself and others? Are these being attended to? (p. 12)

In terms of the supportiveness of the faculty, Michelle comments:

> They've given me a lot of time. They really have not pressured me. And I kind of expected, and I ask for pressure and put up my own hurdles in the lack of it. Sometimes I'm at a loss because of the lack of structure and pressure. But I realize the wisdom of that too, because I do have to find my own way.

On the other hand, Michelle was aware of the fact that educational institutions may not be as accommodating to the adult learner as they should be and may not always be open to alternative educational pursuits (i.e. research into the area of spirituality). She cautioned me of this in regards to my own research, indicating, "It's very relevant, but anyone that wants to narrow it to the narrowest, or to the Alberta viewpoint of higher education, is barking up the wrong tree."

As has been mentioned before, Gail's spiritual journey was initially one that focused on self-actualization and developed into a social change perspective as she recognized her desire to have greater impact through her educational role when she returned to her homeland. She described this changed perspective as a movement from "just going through the motions" to a point where she now indicates that "I want to go back and work with those kids, and I want to feel in a way that what I've done there is something they couldn't do without." Within this statement, Gail demonstrates her personal healing and spiritual growth and connects this to her future role as an educator.

Gail embodies the notion of education that Parker Palmer (1999) describes as moving towards healing and wholeness. He comments that:

> …education at its best—this profound human transaction called teaching and learning—is not just about getting information or getting a job. Education is about healing and wholeness. It is about empowerment, liberation, transcendence, about renewing the vitality of life. It is about finding and claiming ourselves and our place in the world. (p. 18)

Gail's own healing has given her the strength to bring wholeness to her teaching practice upon her return to South Africa. She now challenges herself to "help kids make connections" and "find meaning in their lives." For Gail, "people must see their worlds differently because they've been in contact with me."

Remen (1999) speaks to this challenge as well, indicating:

> Educare, the root of the word education, means "to lead forth the hidden wholeness," the innate integrity that is in every person. And as such, there is a place where "to educate" and "to heal" mean the same thing. Educators are healers. (p. 35)

As Gail contemplated the role of education and spirituality, she commented on the opportunities that education opens up. Gail indicated that in her life, the experiences and challenges gave her a broader perspective on her life and allowed her to see the world differently. This empowering aspect of education allowed her to develop personally and will empower her role as an educator. Gail describes this point, indicating that:

> Education gives you more than just the book knowledge, it exposes you to opportunities, to find angles, to problem solve—and knowledge brings that about. If you have limited knowledge, you can't see more angles, you can't think of different angles to approach the problem. It provides different ways and angles to look at things, and thereby change your cognition about them, the way you think about them, the way people respond about things, about you....

As Gail developed personally, the skills and knowledge she acquired in university allowed her to view the world differently. Gail incorporated her academics and spiritual development to empower her role as an educator in South Africa.

Linda Vogel (2000) develops this notion, indicating:

> As we reckon with our spiritual lives, we encounter, reflect, imagine, and create different ways of seeing and engaging persons and situations with renewed energy, hope and vision. (p. 18)

Gail's ability to integrate new insights from her own education and personal development provided her with an opportunity to realize a "vocation" that incorporates spirit, soul and her role as educator.

John Dirkx (1995) speaks to the separation of spirit and work and the need for unity in these areas. He comments:

> Right livelihood reflects a deep, inner capacity to see meaning in what one is doing and to approach one's work as if it were an expression of one's inner self.... When we view work as something we do to live or to

> consume, we split off from ourselves a vital aspect of that which is needed to actualize to deeper, more meaningful dimensions of human experience…. The continuing sense of alienation that many of us experience in our work reflects the absence in our culture of a deep understanding of the spirit, purpose, and meaning of human experience. Work as right livelihood implies a deep spiritual stance towards one's work, a stance that involves matters of both soul and spirit. To educate for right livelihood is to foster a soulful and spiritual approach to one's chosen work. (p. 3)

Donald attributed his personal and spiritual development to his exposure to education and the new ideas and perspectives that education permitted. Similar to Gail, he seized the challenges of education and utilized those challenges to, as he states, "step out of the box". Donald recognized his own limitations:

> Education opened my eyes to the spiritual side of the world. Before that, I only saw one thing and that was based on my own religion—my United religion—that was my reality. I didn't know any better. I wasn't educated enough to critically analyze what I was being taught or question the authority of the bible or of the church. Having gone to school, that opened my eyes to different realities, different spiritual beings, and different religions, which also put into question my own religion and what I liked and didn't like about it.

Donald's experience was also developmental in terms of his sense of self. As he states, "It's taken me a long time to get to that point of finding out what are the foundations of who Donald is, and that is twofold through education and through spirituality." As Donald experienced growth, the combination of life experience, education and introspection allowed him to establish a multifaceted spiritual being:

> It was kind of like stepping out of the box—which was also education, because having the door opened to an institution of higher learning and having different ideas and different information, it became a lot clearer. It reinforced my thoughts on why I didn't like organized religion and then

> also opened my eyes to another aspect of my spiritual being.

Reflecting on his experiences with higher education institutions, Donald recognized that his contact with the academy was a double-edged sword. While opening his mind to differing experiences, attitudes and perspectives, as an openly gay man he also experienced discrimination and oppression—his poem (Chapter 4) expresses some of this frustration. Remen (1999) comments on these stifling aspects of education:

> Sadly, our current education system, rather than cultivating our sense of openness and engagement, instead heightens our feelings of isolation and insulation. Schooling, especially as inculturation, builds up preconceptions, expectations, and rigid notions of order and behavior. It breaks down our experience of an alive whole into an endless array of categories, taxonomies, concepts, criteria, and evaluative judgements. These categories are then studied, almost exclusively, using conceptual and material approaches. (p. 81)

Donald, not being employed as an educator by profession, had little to say about how educators might incorporate spirituality into their educational practice. He did warn about the need to avoid indoctrinating students but in the end turned back to his personal experiences, claiming:

> For me, my spiritual side grows as I grow. I learn more about it, as I learn more about myself and learn more about the world--and I appreciate a lot more.

Final Remarks

Having listened to the many voices that have spoken of spirit, soul and spirituality, Linda Vogel's (2000) comments in Addressing the Spiritual Dimensions of Adult Learning seemed the best framework to begin a final discussion on spirituality. She comments, "Our spirits—our inner lives, our hearts—affect who we are and how we engage others and the world. The stories and rituals of our families and faith communities have helped us become who we are as persons" (p. 17). At the beginning of this work, I indicated that part of my reasoning for pursuing this research topic was my need to understand my own transformational learning. Over the past five years, my life has gone through a number of changes. While trying to put structure around my research and my own learning process, my own stages of development and personal transformation (i.e. life crises, extensive readings, challenges to my assumptions, dialogue, critical thought, reflection and action) undoubtedly affected my ability to listen, hear and understand my research participants and the literature on spirituality. I would be hesitant to attribute one particular theory to my transformation, but the process certainly matches some of the stages outlined by Cranton, Griffin, Purpel and Mezirow. I feel fortunate that the first course I took during this degree provided me with the opportunity to pursue a wide range of readings and participate in dialogue and critical thinking. Over the course of five years of working on my degree, educators who depict the concepts spoken of in this research have encouraged me. Others, who questioned my research topic and pronounced their scepticism about any research that would try to bring education and spirituality together, have at times unnerved me. During a class on transformative learning, my supervisor, Dr. Sue Scott described "soul work" as "dark" and "messy". This comment stayed with me throughout my research. When I contemplate my research—I recognize both the "darkness" and the "messiness". The darkness for me, is the numinous, unfamiliar and at times, frightening qualities of spirit, soul or spirituality. For most of us—from childhood we fear the unknown (or the darkness) and avoid it. Only as we approach adulthood do we typically confront these fears. The messiness, for me, describes my research topic as a whole—spirituality and education. Not once have I been able to clearly define the major themes, come up with good quantitative data, or state something in "absolute" terms—consider this from the perspective of a researcher, student or even someone just trying to help people understand their interest in this area—definitely what some might call messy.

In the end, through listening to the participants who so willingly told their stories and by developing a framework around those perspectives, I was able to learn about spirituality, soul and spirit. Returning to heuristic methodology, one of the end results of this research should be that I am able to describe the essence of the phenomenon, this I cannot do. One of the things that I did learn from this research is that spirituality is an individual phenomenon. Although the concepts I have spoken about are themes for each of the participants, each person experiences those themes differently and understands them differently. The participants and literature suggest why incorporating spirituality into education is important. I leave the following recommendations for practice as food for thought for those who might want to include spirituality in their classrooms and instructional methodology.

Implications for Practice

The following recommendations for practice come from both the research participants and the literature. While they are not exhaustive, they provide a framework for educators interested in including spirituality as a part of their teaching:

Engaging in Our Own Spiritual Work

Both the research participants and the literature comment on the need for educators to be engaged in their own spiritual work or as Linda Vogel (2000) suggests, "in touch with their own spiritual journeys" (p. 20). Educators who are engaged in their own spiritual work are better able to connect themselves with their students (Parker Palmer, 1999, p. 27) and bring greater depth to their students' ability to engage in the learning process. Boyd and Meyers (1988) describe adult educators who engage in this spiritual work as "co-journeyers" and "facilitators of spiritual power" whose role it is to "foster the inner journey" (pp. 280-282).

Transformative Learning Environments

The research participants and the literature confirm that learning environments either support or hinder spiritual development. Patricia Cranton (1992) describes a transformative environment as one that challenges assumptions and provides guidance and support. Ionnone and Obenauf (1999) indicate that in order to promote spirituality, learning environments must be ones where "flexibility, creativity, newness, engagement, reflectiveness, and teacher and student stories of meaning-making are honored" (p.739). John Dirkx indicates that the role of educators is not to teach soulwork or spirituality, but rather to nurture soul which he defines as recognizing "what is already inherent within our relationships and experiences, to acknowledge its presence with the teaching and learning environment, to respect its sacred message". (In Tisdell, 2000, p. 310) Minimally, Kevin Mott-Thornton indicates that for a liberal education to be developmentally ideal, it must promote self-understanding, confidence and courage, self-control, wisdom, a sense of justice, self-direction, imagination and generosity. (p. 203)

Searching for Meaning

All of the research participants spoke about their search for meaning and purpose. Adult educators need to recognize that students seek out learning experiences that incorporate this feature. David Purpel (1995) indicates that "each of us engages in some form or another in the troubling and daunting task of searching for and acting on meaning…." (In Kohli, 1995, p. 156) Purpel goes so far as to indicate that this quest is a professional responsibility for adult educators and that it is a necessary part of genuine dialogue with students. Boyd and Myers (1988) suggest that "courage, honesty, willpower and work are demanded of oneself on such journeys. Support, love and wisdom must be there along the way. The journey is not for the weak nor to be travelled in isolation" (p. 283).

Spiritual Educators

The research participants were troubled by how an educator might incorporate spirituality into the academic environment without imposing doctrine or one's own values and beliefs. Kate was cautious that we might start developing a "spirituality curriculum." The suggested approach is to engage in a process Parker Palmer (1983) relates to the essence of education. He indicates that "'to educate' is 'to draw out' and that the teacher's task is not to fill the student with facts but to evoke the truth the student holds within." (p. 43) Linda Vogel (2000) summarizes this well when she indicates that "the art of teaching is knowing when and how to support and when and how to challenge adult learners" (p. 20).

Connections

If there was a central image that tied all of the research participants experiences together, it was the theme of connections. In her book, The Soul of Education, Rachael Kessler (2000) comments on the importance of "deep connections". She emphasizes different kinds of connections–with one's inner self, with others, with the world, with nature, with knowledge, with the divine, with religious figures, with emotions, with the body, with imagination, and with the creative process. As Leona English (2000) comments "the search for meaning is bound up in the understanding of everyday life. It involves the realization that life is greater than our sphere of influence and that our future is bound up with that of others" (p. 30). Spiritual education needs to support and nurture these connections.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research has offered insight into spirituality from both a personal and academic perspective. It has attempted to define concepts such as spirit and soul and contemplate how these elements of spirituality relate to the academy and adult education. As we move into the 21st century, the move towards an academic system that revolves around technology, employability and accessibility seems inevitable. As educators, we will be increasingly challenged to focus on education that creates employment rather than concerning ourselves with environments that are holistic or spiritual. We need to remember, as Ionnone and Obenauf (1999) comment that "a spiritual curriculum doesn't mean we want students to be irrational, it means we want them to add to the rational, the logical, in a higher, deeper, more fruitful sense. A spiritual curriculum creates an awareness of the world around us, the connectedness of all that is a part of the universe, and when it happens, we are changed for life" (p. 741).

Given the developmental nature of this research, continued work in this area is required to ensure that concepts are adequately defined and that the themes developed in this area are considered from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective. Further refinement of the terminology can only serve to help us better understand spirituality. The present research has focused on an introductory understanding of the concepts and although there has been some attempt to consider how spirituality might apply within an academic setting, further research in this area is required. Research into practical strategies that would allow educators to incorporate spirituality into their curriculum is still an area that should be developed. As we consider our own spiritual development and that of our students, I leave you with this thought from Linda Vogel (2000):

> Reckoning with our own spiritual lives can be life-giving and may help adult educators find ways to invite students to reckon with their spiritual lives. This is an awesome responsibility that holds potential for transformative teaching and learning. Once we open the door to talking about beliefs and the practices of faith, we are called to listen in deep, open ways and to recognize that sharing faith can be done noncoercively so that we are able to understand and honor different experiences and beliefs. (p. 21)

As I conclude this chapter, I am reminded of the heuristic process that challenges the researcher to develop some creative synthesis of the data--infusing the work with personal and professional insights. Oddly enough, one of my more profound insights resulted from asking one of the research participants (Donald) to summarize what he had learned from the research experience or to summarize his thoughts on spirituality. He refused the challenge, suggesting instead that we can never bring closure to a topic like spirituality. He commented:

> I wouldn't want this to be closure. I would not say it's the end, this has spawned more thoughts; this has reinforced what I believe and who I am; and this is where I would like it to take me…

The following poem suggests where my journey may take me:

The Journey

Spirit
The search for meaning and purpose
Yearning, learning, striving
An endless need and drive
Transcending my mortality--
Understanding the universe

Soul
My connection to you
The union of brother, sister, man and woman
Recognizing kinship in a face I have never met
Our sorrow as we pass each other by--
Affinity lost

My journey
Experiencing the essence of living
Seeing the reality of desperation in others
Recognizing our unity and yet, not comprehending it
The assembly of reason and humankind—
Collective consciousness.

Written by Kevin Hood

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Appendix

A. Letter of Introduction to Research Participants
B. Participant-Release Agreement
C. An Early Personal Formulation of Participant Themes

Appendix A: Letter of Introduction to Research Participants

Project Title: Spirituality and Adult Education Date: ____________________

Dear____________________,

Thank you for your interest in my research project on the experience of spirituality. I value the unique contribution you can make to my study and am excited about the possibility of your participation in it. The purpose of this letter is to reiterate some of the things that we have already discussed and to secure your signature on the participation-release form that you will find attached.

The research model I am using is a qualitative one known as heuristics. I am seeking comprehensive depictions or descriptions of your experience. In this way, I hope to illuminate or answer my question: "What is the experience of spirituality within the context of adult education?". The term spirituality, is being used in its broadest sense, and is not indicative of any particular philosophical or religious perspective.

Through your participation as a co-researcher, I hope to understand the essence of the phenomenon as it reveals itself in your experience. You will be asked to recall specific episodes or events in your life that you feel represent or describe spirituality. I am seeking vivid, accurate and comprehensive portrayals of what these experiences were like for you. You will be asked to recall thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, as well as situations, events, places and people connected with your experience. You may also be asked to share personal journals with me or other ways in which you have recorded your experience--for example, in letters, poems, or artwork.

I value your participation and thank you for the commitment of time, energy and effort. If you have any further questions before signing the release form or if there is a problem with the date or time of our first meeting, I can be reached at 439-0636.

Sincerely,

Kevin Hood

*Adapted from Clark Moustakas (*Heuristic Research, 1990)*

Appendix B: Participation-Release Agreement

I agree to participate in a research study of spirituality as described in the attached narrative. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and am participating voluntarily. I grant permission for the data to be used in the process of Kevin Hood completing a Master of Education degree, including a thesis and any other future publications. I understand that my name and other demographic information that might identify me will not be used and will be held in strict confidence. All data collected from the research project will be kept confidential and will not be released without my written permission.

I understand that my agreement to participate in this research means that I agree to participate in a process that may take up to one month to complete. This process will include a minimum of three one hour taped interviews. I will also be documenting my experiences in some other format such as a journal, poems or artwork. I understand this material may be published, but my name will not be associated with the research.
I understand that I may refuse to answer any question within an interview and I may withdraw my consent and cancel my participation in the research project at any time, without penalty.

(Participant)	(Witness)	(Researcher)

(Address)

Appendix C: An Early Personal Formulation of Participant Themes

Themes	Spirit	Soul	Journey	Connecting Spirituality to Education	Spirituality & Religion
Participant **Kate**	1. Spirit as transcendence. 2. Peak Experiences. (Music) 3. A search for spirit is not self-serving. 4. Self-work and spiritual practice.	1. Interconnectedness. 2. Universality. 3. Service to humanity.	1. The "wake up call" to spirituality. 2. Openness & readiness. 3. The search for meaning and purpose. 4. The journey connects the lessons.	1. Education today is bereft of spirituality. 2. Education as preparatory work. 3. A holistic approach to education. What is a spiritual teacher's role? 4. Can you have a spirituality curriculum	1. Appreciation of different faiths. 2. I see soul in more of a moralistic framework. 3. Punitive aspect of religion.
Michelle	1. Spirit as a process of individuation. 2. Peak Experiences. (Dancing) 3. Transcendence.	1. Soul as a sense of direction. 2. Soul as a connecting function conveying meaning. 3. Soul as the umbilical cord with the collective unconscious.	1. Disorienting dilemma—the start of a search for meaning. 2. Finding my own way. 3. Sense of mission versus the path. 4. The spiritual journey.	1. School as a place to find answers. 2. A sense of community in academia. Encouragement to ask questions.	1. Soul has a religious connotation, spirituality is broader and easier for some to accept. 2. Spirituality has taken on a non-religious meaning.
Gail	1. Transcending self. 2. The search for deeper meaning. 3. The passion of spirit.	1. Connection to a higher power. 2. Soul as a bond to family. 3. Soul emerges in our depth. 4. Soulful experiences. (Singing)	1. Finding meaning and purpose. 2. The journey of self-actualization.	1. Making education personally meaningful. 2. Education as a place to acquire skills and experiences. 3. Education exposes you to opportunities.	1. Soul as a part of my religion. 2. Connection of religion to family.
Don	1. Spirit is omnipresent and omnipotent. 2. I still have agency and power in my life. 3. Spirituality is very ethereal.	1. The bible is a connection to the past.	1. Spiritual work. 2. The spiritual journey—education and life experience. 3. Spiritual practice guides us back to ourselves.	1. A holistic approach to spirituality and education. 2. Education can change your reality.	1. Religion is organized, spirituality encompasses whole life. 2. Religious doctrine and discrimination.